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[WAITING AN OPPORTUNITY.]

LOVE'S CHRISTMAS.

BY CHARLES GARVICK,

AUTHOR OF

"Christmas Before and Behind the Curtain," etc.

CHAPTER XX.

Begone, dull care, nor fright my soul

With sickly apprehension.

Begone, nor in the flowing bowl

We'll drown thee and dissension.

STEPHEN HARGRAVE waited in ambush until he had ascertained that Stella had put herself in possession of the letter, then with downcast face and stolid mien went about his duties of the day as silently and grimly as ever.

Once or twice he glanced with a peculiar expression at his young master, who worked at his statue all day with enthusiastic ardour, as if his life depended upon his getting it done by a certain time, but whenever Louis spoke to him he answered as curtly as usual, and Sir Richard's secret was safe.

In the evening Louis left his studio and sank into his easy-chair in the dining-room, quite tired out; but there was satisfaction shining through all the weariness upon his face.

"Well, Stephen," he said, as the man put the dinner on, "is there any news?"

There was no occasion to specify the description required; Stephen knew as well as his master.

"No," he answered, gruffly.

Louis sighed.

"You have not seen her?"

"No."

"Have you watched?"

"I have."

"Well," said Louis, with another wistful sigh, "I knew you would watch well for me, Stephen, and that I can trust you! I would give all the world for a word from her to-night. You are sure the carriage has not left the park?"

"Yes, I am," said Stephen, moodily. "Haden't you better eat your dinner? You've been working like a horse and the things are getting cold."

Louis was more tired and disappointed than hungry, but he drew up to the table and toyed with the plain but well-cooked viands.

Then he took up his letters—long blue ones, from the lawyers, and sighed over them, and at last, without a word, told Stephen to get his coat and hat.

"I can't stop in the house to-night," he murmured. "Something seems to weigh upon my spirits. If I were inclined to believe in such things or give way to them I should say that I had a strong presentiment of coming ill. I want a walk, fresh air, and, above all, to see your sweet face, my beautiful Stella. Well, if I cannot see thee the next best thing is to be near thee."

Stephen helped him on with his coat and handed him his hat.

"You're going out?" he said.

"It looks like it, Stephen," said Louis, good-humouredly.

"To wander about the park and catch your death of cold?"

"That's as may be," retorted Louis, a little more coldly. "But you need not stay at home or wait up for me, if you want to go out or to bed."

"I'll go out, if it's all the same," said Stephen.

"Very well," said Louis, and buttoning his coat round him he walked briskly through the hall into the night, his face turned towards the Vale, as most assuredly his heart and thoughts were also.

Stephen Hargrave waited until Louis had had time to get clear of the immediate neighbourhood of the Hut, then wrapped himself up with something approaching a disguise, and in his usual roundabout, careful way reached the Box.

He gave the usual signal, but there came no response. Again he whistled, and without eliciting any answer.

Twice or thrice more the suppressed owl's shriek which he had been ordered to imitate left his lips, then, impatient to reach the Hut again before Louis, he stole up to the window and tapped at it.

Against the blind he could see the shadow of Sir Richard's head thrown in a bent position, as if he were asleep.

Very quietly and gently he tapped the window with his finger-nails, but the shadow did not move. Then at last, fearful of the delay and danger it engendered, he crept up to the door, and quietly opening it entered the room.

At a glance he saw that Sir Richard had fallen asleep over his desk, and for a few moments he stood with the door in his hand, watching him.

Then he closed the door, and went up to his usual chair, seated himself, and fell to his staring at the fire moodily, prepared to wait until his master should please to wake.

Suddenly Sir Richard started in his sleep and muttered some incoherent words.

Stephen paid not the slightest regard, did not appear to have heard them even, but, with a startling distinctness, Sir Richard, still in his sleep, exclaimed:

"Lucy! Lucy! Give me the boy!" and threw out one hand with an expression halting midway between repulsion and entreaty.

Stephen Hargrave started and sprang up from his chair, his face working horribly, his eyes filled with a horrified and threatening glare upon Sir Richard's face.

The noise of his sudden uprising woke the sleeper. Sir Richard started, clenched his two hands, and, rising, stared round him.

So they stood, the two men, confronting each other, each looking as if he had been dreaming some fearful dream or seeing some agitating vision.

Sir Richard was the first to speak.

"You! How did you get in?"

At the sound of his voice Stephen Hargrave's face resumed its old expression of dogged subjection, and with a dull sigh he sank into the chair again.

"Through the door," he replied. "I whistled and waited until I dared wait no longer, then stopped at the window. You didn't hear me, you were asleep. I came in. You didn't want any of the servants to find me hanging about, did you?"

"Quite right," said Sir Richard, passing his hand over his face, which was still rather white and haggard. "Quite right. Well, did you deliver the letter?"

"Yes," said Stephen, "I saw her take it with her own hand."

"Good again," said Sir Richard. "Now listen," and, in clear, distinct tones, which seemed to fix the lesson upon the listener's brain as a chisel cuts an inscription on steel, Sir Richard revealed his plot and set forth the work he intended his slave to perform.

Stephen Hargrave listened attentively until Sir Richard had finished, then he took his cap and rose.

"Is that all?"

"That is all," said Sir Richard, with a cold smile. "Not a great deal, nor a very difficult undertaking—but it must be done well. No over-acting the part or straggling at the last moment. You understand me?"

"I do," said the man, "and I'll do it. Afterwards—after this job is done—I can go my way I suppose. You will have no farther need of me?"

"That's as may be," said Sir Richard, coldly. "If I do you will have to do it."

Then he filled the glass of brandy as usual. Stephen drank it, and, with a grim "good night," took his departure.

Louis meanwhile had reached the park, and, with the recklessness of youth, scaled the wooden palings and trespassed upon the grounds of the Vale.

It was a beautiful night, the moon nearly at the full, and he could see the outlines of the house and every window and door in it as clearly as if the sun had shone upon it.

There was a light in the drawing-room, and towards this Louis was drawn, as a moth is fascinated by a candle.

He fancied that he could distinguish his darling's shadow upon the blinds, and he watched motionless in the cold, waiting to catch the sound of her voice. At last his patience was rewarded—more fully and sweetly than he could have expected.

The shadow disappeared from the window, and a minute or so afterwards he heard some chords struck upon the piano.

He drew near the window, his heart beating wildly, his cheek flushed with expectant delight, which nearly burst forth in passionate words of love as Stella's sweet, clear voice commenced singing.

It was a mournful, sadly bewitching air, and the words—every one of which Louis could hear—harmonized in their wistful intonation with the music.

Low sits the sun among the meads.

The heavy clouds are red with haze,
The sunlight reddens both your hands
And casts a glow upon your face.

In coming years this night, my love,
Will stand out clearly from the past.
Its memory, bitter sweet, shall prove
Our love found voice to speak at last.

A year ago we met—no more!
The twelve months seem so long, so short!
What worth was life to me before
The glamour of your eyes I caught?

And now! ah, well, the tide comes in,
To-morrow again the tide goes out;
And love, like pleasure, pain and sin,
Must take its turn and turn about.

No, keep the flowers, one and all!
Such helps to memory need I not.
Love's pride must surely have its fall,
And futile hoping be forgot.

Stella's voice quivered on the last line and prolonged it until the full sense of it set Louis's heart aching.

"A mournful song," he murmured. "But, thank Heaven, your sadness shall be confined to love ditties if fate will permit me to watch over your future. 'Futile hoping be forgot!' Heaven forbid that our hoping, my darling, should be futile! Nay, the course of true love may not run smoothly, but so that it finds its way to the river of happiness at last who of us dare complain of the rocks and weeds in our way? Oh, my darling, what would I give to stand beside you now and dispel the silence of your sadness with some more cheerful strain? Strange—there must be some sympathy between us—I, with my presentiment of coming ill heavy upon my soul, and Stella pouring out her heart's sadness in a mournful song. Bah! I do not deserve my happiness by hunting up trouble in this way; let me wait until it comes, and when it does let me meet it like a man and overcome it."

Then, with a fervent good night, which Stella, alas, could not hear, he went away moodily, scaled the park railings and returned to the Hut.

It was fearfully cold, the lights—save those in his own room—were extinguished, the whole place was intensely silent.

He went to bed, but not to sleep, the presentiment took larger form in the darkness and haunted him like a ghost, and whenever he woke, with a start, some voice from within him—which seemed

rather to come out of the darkness round him—waited in harmony with the wind:

"Love's pride must surely have its fall,
And futile hoping be forgot."

The first love-letter generally brings sweetest delight. Stella's first love-letter, joyfully as she had welcomed it, brought her an indescribable pain. There was a void in her heart before she had received it, and it made that void seem greater, instead of filling it as it should have done. There was something almost unsatisfying; although its professions of devotion were passionate and frequent enough they seemed hollow and artificial. Louis did not talk so, it was utterly unlike him, and it fretted her to find his first letter so utterly unlike what she expected it would be. Then again it spoke of danger, of a palpable dread of some scheme of Sir Richard's and contained that request which would entail danger to her fair fame and name if she granted it. Meet him at night in the dark!

Her cheek paled and her heart sank at the idea. In the first place, how could she leave the house undetected? In the next place some of the servants or villagers might see her and recognize her well-known figure, disguise and muffle as she might, while she was on her way; and, lastly, how could she hope to re-enter the house unnoticed?

But love laughs at locksmiths, and Stella, once more kissing the letter, hid it in her bosom and determined to obey her lover's wish, cost her what it might. And from the moment she had so determined a promise, near akin to that which had fallen upon Louis, settled upon her, and sleeping and waking she dreamed of nothing but it.

Under the influence of that throbbing mood she had sung the song Louis had heard and sighed at; under the same bewitching she waited feverishly for the hour which the letter had appointed.

It came, and came, which brings about so much good and evil, and which touches men's minds trouble, stood her friend—or enemy.

Mrs. Newton, complaining of bad headache, which she had brought on by overworking herself over the steward's books in a fit of perversity, retired to her room, thinking that Stella was safe for the night, and determined that she would take her to town in the morning.

Stella stole up to her room and slipped into her furs. Very beautiful was the picture which the mirror presented to her gaze when she stood before it, till with indefinable prudence she threw a large water-proof over the whole, drew the hood over her head and—still pretty, despite the harkness wrap—quietly stole downstairs again, taking the precaution to lock the door of the bedroom and slip the key in her pocket. She was compelled to wait behind a statue of a sleeping satyr upon the stairs until a footman, who was removing the last service of the dinner from the hall, had finished his task, and even then narrowly escaped detection, for the man came back for a forgotten éponge just as the door closed after her.

CHAPTER XXI.

The dove's nature was made
To satisfy the Fowler's web; let doves beware
When they see nets, and go not there.

As the letter had prophesied, it was a magnificent night. The moonlight lit up every tree and hedge of the snow-covered landscape.

Stella could have found her way from the Vale to the Hut in the dark, but to-night the scene was as light as day, almost too light for her safety, and she kept under the shadow of the hedges and the old wall while she was on the Vale land, and preferred walking deep in the snow when she entered the park to be under the shelter of the trees rather than tread the hard, clean, frozen path in the full light of the calm, peaceful moon.

And now, as she neared the place of tryst, her heart beat fast and excitedly. Soon, in a few minutes, she would be with Louis; five minutes more and she would be nestling against his strong, blithe heart as the robins pressed against the strong, sturdy oaks in the park.

Then, at the bend of the path, she caught the first sight of the red curtains of the Hut, and her heart throbbed more quickly, and from her half-parted, smiling lips came the low, tender love words:

"My Louis."

She reached the wicket, and expected to find his arm round her and his words of welcome and devotion in her ears, but the whole place was silent and motionless in the calm stillness of the moonlight.

Not a breath of wind stirred, not a twig of the snow-laden branches but seemed carved in ebony and ivory impossible of motion.

Amidst all her passionate eagerness Stella's heart gave a leap of fear and alarm, but she shook it off with a rallying sigh, and placing her hand on the small wicket waited, her face turned towards the entrance of the Hut.

Suddenly, as if it had sprang from the ground, the figure of a man stood beside her.

She turned and the cry of alarm which she was about to utter died on her lips frozen by fear.

The man was wrapped up to the point of disguise; nothing but a pair of dark, brooding eyes were discernible, and as he laid his hand on her arm Stella had not the slightest suspicion of his identity.

"Don't be frightened, miss," he said, in a voice of feigned thickness. "You're Miss Newton, ain't you?"

"If I am," breathed Stella, "what do you want with me?"

"I've come from—you know who."

"Speak out plainly," said Stella, pressing her hand upon her bosom and summoning up all her courage.

"From Mr. Felton, if you must have it," growled the man, evidently annoyed by her unexpected interruption. "I've come to tell you as he can't meet you here, but that you're to come with me to the carriage entrance round at the side."

"Cannot come here?" faltered Stella. "Why not?"

"He's afraid of being watched; one as is his money—you don't want his name, do you?—has got some suspicion of this meeting and might—"

Stella caught the man's arm and looked round with genuine alarm.

"Sir Richard!" she exclaimed. "Near here! Come! I will go with you at once!"

The man smiled with dark meaning and tramped off, Stella followed with beating heart and anxious face.

They made the curve of the fence and came upon what was called the carriage entrance, from the fact of the road broadening at that place and allowing of a vehicle to turn, which it could not at any other part of the drive. As they turned the corner Stella started.

"What is that?" she said, raising her hand and pointing to something black and square which stood close against the rough, uneven ledge.

"That's a carriage; it's all right," replied the man. "Mr. Felton is waiting inside."

Stella drew back and eyed her guide with a keen, piercing doubtfulness.

"A carriage?" she said. "Mr. Felton inside! I do not believe it! I will go no farther," and she drew back with a gesture of determination.

"Hush, miss! don't speak so loud," exclaimed the man, edging up to her with a sinister scowl. "Do you want to alarm the neighbourhood and set it up to find ye here? Come, you must come now you've got thus far, it's more than I dare do to go back! Mr. Felton's pay are pretty severely for such a mistake."

"No," said Stella. "I will not go! Go to Mr. Felton and tell him that I have gone back and—and that I cannot—no, I cannot obey him!"

She turned as she spoke and gathered her wrap round her preparatory to making good her escape, but the man, evidently divining her intention, sprang noiselessly upon her and taking her up in his strong arms half-carried and half-dragged her to the carriage—skilfully twisting her cloak round her face as he did so, so that it was impossible for her to shriek or call for assistance. But Stella was strong for a woman, stronger than her captor had given her credit for being, and she struggled so fiercely that by the time he had carried her within arm's length of the carriage she had succeeded in uncovering her mouth, and, raising her voice to its utmost, sent forth a piercing scream.

Before its echo had died away a figure darted from out of the hedge and dashing at her captor hurled him to the ground, Stella being dragged down in his fall.

Before the prostrate man could regain his feet the stranger flung himself upon his breast and held him down to the ground.

Stella, trembling in every limb, and white as the snow, sprang to her feet, and, leaning against the carriage door, struggled with a deadly faintness which rapidly threatened to overcome her.

A voice—the voice of the person who had so opportunely arrived to rescue her—chased her swoon away.

"You villain!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing with that lady? Who are you?"

At the sound of the voice Stella sprang forward.

"Sir Richard Wildfang!" she exclaimed.

"Miss Newton!" was the astonished retort. "Can I believe my senses? How came you in this ruffian's power?"

As he spoke he raised his hand and struck the prostrate man with his fist.

Stella pressed both her hands upon her aching brow and swayed like a reed shaken in the wind.

"Don't ask me; I implore you humbly; do not ask me!"

Sir Richard rose, still keeping his hand upon the arm of the ruffian, now captured in his turn, and looked at her with a fine expression of mingled pain and regret.

Then he bowed silently and turned to the man.

"At least we will unmask this ruffian; you will permit me to do that?"

Stella made a gesture of assent with her hand. Sir Richard struck the cap off the man's head and tore away the comforter which covered the lower part of his face and revealed the features of Stephen Hargrave.

Stella uttered a cry of despair. Sir Richard fell back, with a look of indignant horror.

"Stephen Hargrave," he said. "Mr. Louis Felton's servant!"

Stella shrank closer to the carriage and covered her face with her hands.

Both the men knew that she was weeping. Sir Richard grasped the man by the arm and dragged him into the full moonlight.

"No," he exclaimed, his voice thick with indignant rage, "you shall not escape your punishment, though this lady, whom you have so insulted, pleads for you. Answer me, you ruffian!"

And he shook him as he would have done a dog, Stephen Hargrave submitting indeed with dogged moodiness.

"Who is the instigator—the chief of this outrage? You are only a tool, I feel assured. Speak, or I'll choke you, ruffian!"

Stephen Hargrave hung his head and glanced sideways at Stella.

Sir Richard was also looking that way from the corner of his eyes.

Stephen Hargrave waited until he saw that she was listening, with strained intent, and fearful face, then said, sulkily:

"That will do, Sir Richard. You don't want to choke me, and let my betters go free. I'm only a servant; I've got my living to get, and don't wish the young lady no harm. If I'm ordered to do anything, and well paid for doing it, ain't I obliged to do it?"

"Quick!" said Sir Richard, sternly. "Who ordered you to commit this crime? What scandal could dare so base a thing? Quick, or I'll—"

"Who should order me but my master—Mr. Felton?" sulkily retorted Stephen.

Stella uttered a faint, despairing cry.

Sir Richard shook his man roughly.

"That's false, it must be," he said, in a broken voice.

"False, why? What'd be the good of my trying to deceive you?" said Stephen. "Besides, do I want Miss Newton? Should I've got a carriage to run away with her in?"

"True," muttered Sir Richard. "But I cannot believe it—realize it."

Then he turned to Stella.

"Can you supply the clue? I beseech you—for your own safety and honour to answer me. Did Mr. Felton make this appointment—ask you to meet him here?"

Stella inclined her head and covered her face with her hands.

Sir Richard sighed.

"Base, vile, scoundrel, to take advantage of your trusting! Vile indeed must be the man who would suffer you to be thus insulted; to hire a ruffian like this to—to—"

And, as if overwhelmed with rage and indignation, Sir Richard turned away his head and groaned.

Then Stella, as if stung into doubt by the enormity of the crime which was imputed to her lover, sprang forward, and, laying her hand upon Stephen's arm, cried, in piteous accents:

"No, not there must be some dreadful mistake. It is—it must be false! Confess that this wickedness springs unbidden from your own bad heart. Confess that Mr. Felton knows nothing of it! Oh! say it is false, and I will forgive you, and let you go unpunished!"

"I'll say what you like," said Stephen, sulkily.

"But the truth is the truth, and that is that I'm only doing my master's bidding."

Stella's wild eyes fixed themselves upon his face with soul-searching scrutiny for a moment.

Then, with a sob, she threw up her face.

"I do not—I will not believe it. He is incapable of such baseness."

CHAPTER XXII.

Mark me, Antonio, when a bad man smiles
Be sure some honest heart must weep,
For there is that within his triumph
Which sets a field of pain.

As if in mockery of her pure trust in him, Louis's voice at that moment broke the silence, for as his well-known form leapt the old gate and came into the moonlight he cried:

"Stephen, where are you? Are you ready?"

Sir Richard glanced at Stella as one who should say:

"You see; it is only too true. He thinks you safe within his clutches."

Then, as Louis came upon the group, and stopped

to stare with incredulous astonishment, Sir Richard advanced towards him with clenched hands and compressed lips.

"No, sir," he cried, with well-feigned passion, "your ruffianly tool is not ready. He has failed in carrying out your vile orders. Miss Newton is safe, and under my protection. Scoundrel! your scheme is frustrated!"

Louis stared at him, then advanced to Stella.

"Miss Newton—Stella, what is all this? Why are you here? Sir Richard Wildfang, too! What does it all mean?"

Sir Richard, with an anxiety not disinterested, interrupted him hastily.

"It means, sir, that your villany is unmasked; that Miss Newton knows you now for what you really are—a base, criminal adventurer."

"Stop!" said a voice, that was Stella's, yet so unlike—so dreadfully, quietly calm that it might have belonged to an automaton. And she, with an expressive gesture, motioned Sir Richard aside, and, advancing, confronted Louis with white, drawn face, and dark, accusing eyes.

"It means, sir," she said, in regular, metallic tones, "that one you had succeeded in deceiving is now undeceived; that one whom you taught to love you has now learned to hate you; that one who would have given her life to purchase you an hour's happiness would now give her life to secure your punishment. It means that from a trusting girl you have transformed me by your baseness to an insulted woman. All this it means, and this much more, that, having escaped your mercenary clutches, the woman you attempted to deceive has learnt the bitter lesson of a wasted love and a wasted life. Go, sir, from my path for evermore. Should you cross it again—beware! I shall find some means of resenting the insult of your presence."

Then she let the hand fall which she had raised in denunciation, and turned.

Louis stood for a moment, white and statuesque with astonishment, then he passed his hand across his forehead, looked up at the clear sky to assure himself that it was not a dream, and held out both his hands imploringly.

"Stella! tell me what it all means! How have I wronged you—how deceived?"

Stella turned again, her face lit up with passionate scorn.

"Would you have me recite the story of your vile plot?" she asked, huskily. "Look within your own heart and read in its baseness the reason for my accusation!"

Louis drew himself up to his full height.

"This is madness," he said. "Vile plot—baseness!—of what do you accuse me?"

"Of the vilest dishonour," said Stella, confronting him. "Do you ask for proofs? Seek them in the confession of your tool and accomplice, who has sought safety in flight; seek them in the evidence that remains—that carriage!"

"Accomplice—carriage!" repeated Louis. "Stella, that carriage—oh! listen, I beseech you!" For Stella had taken the arm which Sir Richard had in stern silence offered her, and, though stung through all his soul by the sight, Louis still spoke calmly and humbly.

"I have heard too much of your homed words; they can deceive me no longer!" said Stella, coldly, over her shoulder.

"This much you shall tell me!" exclaimed Louis, springing forward, his face white, with passion, his teeth clenched, and his eyes blazing. "And I ask it from your false lips, Sir Richard Wildfang." And as he spoke he grasped Sir Richard's arm. "How came you here—both she and you?"

"Ask your own conscience," said Stella, faltering for the first time. "Did you not write me a letter?"

"I did," said Louis.

"Enough!" exclaimed Sir Richard. "He confesses his baseness. Leave us, sir, if you have the slightest vestige of honour remaining!"

Louis drew himself up, and, casting a look of scornful contempt upon the all-anxious face of Sir Richard, appealed to Stella.

"Miss Newton, do you also say 'go'?"

"I do!" said Stella.

"You cast me off—for ever?"

"For ever," said Stella.

He said not another word, but, crossing his arms, stepped from their path, and watched them with set, stone-like face, until they were lost to him round the curve of the road.

He waited even after that for the space of five minutes, then he turned and walked with slow, measured pace up his own carriage entrance.

He slowly climbed the broad stone steps up which he had, so short a time since, and so proudly, led his beautiful Stella, and, with the same indescribable expression of concentrated, deadly calm, pushed open the door and entered the antique dining-room.

He stood before the fire, musing for a few moments, thinking of all he had lost and the mysterious, inexplicable manner in which he had lost it, then,

without a sigh—his sorrow had not really that distinctness yet—he walked into the studio.

A light was burning there, and the marbles seemed to grin and mock at his misery and loneliness, as with folded arms and absent air he walked round the room and looked at them.

"Here in this room," he murmured, "I held her against my heart. Here her lips—so false! so cruel!—told me that she loved me! Here the sweetest happiness my life has ever known fell to me. Blessed be the room—for ever more. Those blind eyes," and he swept his hand before the sightless marble faces, "shall see no misery, no other love scene here! I swore to break them one and all if we were parted. We are parted, and I will keep my vow."

As he spoke he took up the heaviest mallet, and with a passion utterly indescribable struck first at one beautiful face and then at another, until the room was filled with the noise of falling marble, and the fragments themselves, as they dropped and rolled about his feet.

With the mallet in his hand he went into the garden, made his way to the shrubbery, where they had talked so long and joyously, and raised his destroying mallet before the face of a statue which he and Stephen had only that day set up there.

It was the statue of the mother and child which he had worked at so enthusiastically, and which he had placed on the very spot in accordance with Stella's expressed wish.

But as his mallet was swung back a twinge of regret and remorse struck across his soul, and with a sigh he let the mallet fall to his side, gazed up at the plaintive face of the mother, and murmured:

"No, it is sorrow and despair itself. It shall stand!"

Then he flung the mallet from him, and, with drooping head, re-entered the house.

With the same calm self-possession which had settled upon him as snow does upon a mountain, he ascended the stairs, and entering the room slowly and methodically put on his overcoat and heavy walking boots.

Then he descended again, went through every room, looked every door, and, flinging the keys into the farthest corner of the studio, left this house as desolate and silent as he had found it on that Christmas Eve upon which he had met Stella—his beautiful, cruel and only love—at the little wicket.

When he got clear of the ground he stood for a moment and looked back at the Vale, which was all alight in the clear night, and at a steady, swinging pace started off on the London road.

For some few minutes Stella and her companion and protector remained profoundly silent.

Every now and then Sir Richard's dark eyes took stealthy glances at her face, but its expression was not encouraging.

Stella was still as white as the snow and as hard as the frost.

Her eyes were bent upon the ground, her lips compressed. The hand which held her wrap round her was clenched hard and fast as marble upon her bosom.

Altogether, she was as statuesque as Louis, whom she had left watching her retreating form.

But as they neared the Vale the little frost of despair, broken love, and disappointment wavered and began to thaw.

Her lips trembled, her hand unclasped and clasped again spasmodically, her eyelids quivered, and Sir Richard, glancing stealthily again, saw a tear slip from under the lowered lids and fall upon her pale cheek.

Then he thought it was time to speak, and, having learnt his part most thoroughly, he commenced to take it up at the point at which he had been compelled to drop it for awhile.

"Miss Newton—Stella," he murmured, in the softest, most dulcet tone of sympathy. "Do not let your gentle heart distress itself. The cause is not worth a tear! Think how mercifully you have been permitted to escape a great misfortune. Remember what a vile plotter you have been rescued from, and look more hopefully, and—dare I say?—thankfully upon the future."

Stella turned her pale face to him.

"Sir Richard," she said, in a very low, flattering voice, "I am grateful to you, though I cannot show it. I know from what you have rescued me. From a life of misery, chained to one who would have snared me for the worthless dross which has clung to me like a curse! Oh, that I had been the poorest peasant on earth rather than my wealth should have tempted him to such baseness!"

Her tears fell fast and she turned her head aside.

"Do not think any more of him; he is not worth a thought," pleaded Sir Richard. "He will never cross your path again. You must forget him."

"Forget him!" said Stella, with a bitter smile.

"I shall not be permitted to do that. You forget that I have to meet a mother's just reproaches. I am justly punished for deceiving her. But alas, that punishment will be severe."

"You fear, Miss Newton," said Sir Richard.

more softly than ever. "Why should you give her unnecessary pain and anxiety? Let me enjoy the happiness of taking the responsibility of this night's events."

"You?" said Stella, half-shrinking from him. "Yes, I," said Sir Richard. "Do you remember the promise you gave? Though it was a solemn promise I would not have reminded you of it now but that by so doing I may be able to spare you pain."

He paused for a moment.

Stella turned colder even than she grew in the moment of her belief in Louis's treachery.

"Remember how I loved you, how patiently I pleaded, how patiently I waited. Had that scoundrel proved all you could have wished him, all he ought to have proved with such an incentive to virtue as your love, I would never have spoken of my love to you again. But now dare I hope that you will pardon me if I remind you of your promise? He has proved himself to be unworthy of your love—dishonourable, mercenary, base, vile. You will keep your promise?"

He bent over her as he breathed the words in his softest, most musical tones and gently but firmly took her cold hand.

She let it remain in his, passive and icy.

"Your promise," he breathed. "You will keep it?"

Stella looked up at the sky and round at the snow-clothed park, with a wild, helpless, despairing gaze.

What mattered her fate now that her heart was broken?

As well marry Sir Richard, whom she disliked, as another. All men were one to her now—she dreaded, distrusted every son of Adam now that the prince of them all had turned out to be but a fiend in the guise of an angel!

"I will keep my promise," she said, in a faint, low voice.

Sir Richard bent over her hand, and pressed his thin lips upon it.

"Heaven bless you!" he murmured. "I cannot thank you; my heart is brimming o'er with happiness."

Like a wise man he said no more.

They reached the Vale, and Stella entered the hall.

Mrs. Newton came from the drawing-room, white with anger and anxiety.

"Stella, you wicked, wicked girl, where have you been? I have—"

Then she stopped suddenly as she caught sight of Sir Richard, and stared from one to the other.

"You are alarmed, no doubt, my dear Mrs. Newton," he said, coming forward, in his quiet, self-possessed way, and with his calmest, most placid smile. "Miss Stella has been taking a moonlight stroll in the park, when I had the happiness of meeting her."

Mrs. Newton turned to Stella, who smiled a dreadful, ghastly smile and slowly ascended the stairs.

Then Sir Richard gently led Mrs. Newton into the dinner-room, and with a smile of triumph that was not all feigned said, in his silkiest whisper:

"My dear madam, congratulate me! Miss Newton has promised to make me the happiest man in the world!"

(To be continued.)

MAXIMS.

Look before, or you'll find yourself behind.
Necessity never made a good bargain.
Weighty questions ask for deliberate answers.
If pride lead the van beggary brings up the rear.
Keep thy shop, and thy shop will keep thee.
An untruth stands on one leg, truth on two.
What's given shines, what's received is rusty.
Deny self for self's sake.
Poverty wants some things, luxury many things, avarice all things.

It is better to take many injuries than to give one.

There's small revenge in words, but words may be greatly revenged.

SHEEP v. DEER ON LOCHLOMOND.—We understand that it is intended to convert the island of Inch-Lonaig on Lochlomond into a sheep-farm. The island has long been used as a deer-park by the Colquhouns of Luss, and contains a fine forest of yew trees. Large numbers of the deer have lately been forwarded by rail from Balloch. The island, it will be remembered, was that from which the late Sir James Colquhoun was returning from deer-stalking, on the 18th of December, 1873, when, along with his three keepers and a kennel-boy, he was drowned. We believe the neighbouring island of Inch-Couochan has already been let for sheep-farming purposes.

TRUE HEROISM.—The French Minister of Justice has just received a report on a very sad and extraordinary affair, which is not unlikely to create some

sensation. Thirty years ago a young girl named Marie Guernic was found poisoned in her bed. She had been betrothed a short time before to a young man, with whom her younger sister Madeline was said to be desperately in love. The poor girl was at once arrested, tried, and finally condemned to death, which she suffered calmly and valiantly, without uttering a word of complaint or of justification. Everybody felt the greatest sympathy for the poor old father of the two girls, who was giving signs of the most violent grief. He had come into possession of some money which the girls had inherited from their mother, but his grief did not seem to be lessened thereby. A fortnight ago the old man died, and before his death confessed to his parish priest, the Rev. Abbé Barreau, that he was himself the murderer of his eldest daughter. He had, moreover, allowed suspicion to rest on the younger in order to inherit the money of both. The poor victim had died innocent without uttering a word in her defence because she knew who was the murderer, and rather chose to die than to denounce him to justice.

THE CHRONOMETER.

(A FABLE—PARAPHRASED FROM THE SPANISH OF TRIANTE.)

A GENTLEMAN who at a feast
Was tardy half an hour at least,
When asked by those who came before
(Some hungry guests) an hour or more,
To say why he arrived so late,
And so compelled the rest to wait—
Showed his repeater in reply:
"Yourselves are out of time—not I!
Two was the hour proposed," said he,
"And two's the time—as you may see!"
"Ridiculous!" they all replied;
"From the true time your watch is wide;
We came well-nigh an hour ago;
Your watch—like you—is clearly slow!"
"Well," said the man, "say what you will,
I trust my old repeater still;
For many a year I've proved its worth;
There's not a better watch on earth."
At this, of course, each other guest
Drew forth his watch the fact to test;
With what effect?—not much indeed;
For of them all no two agreed!
One plainly showed a quarter past;
Another said, "Ten minutes fast!"
Another, "Forty minutes slow!"
And yet another answered, "No!
'Tis just fourteen, as I'm alive!"
"No," said another, "twenty-five!"
At length the smiling host came in
(A scholar, who erewhile had been
A student of astronomy),
And blandly asking what might be
The point they disagreed about,
Soon put an end to every doubt
By bringing forth an instrument
Contrived on purpose to prevent
All liability to err—
To wit, his good chronometer.
By this—which chanced to disagree
With all the rest—the hour was three!

MORAL.

Though mere opinions many be,
And so, like watches, disagree;
Truth—ever sacred be its name—
Is one and evermore the same.

J. G. S.

THE FÊTE DES ROIS.—The Fête des Rois, as the Epiphany is called in Normandy and Brittany, is essentially a family festival, perpetuating very ancient customs. Towards the close of the day preceding the fête the children of each village assemble in the market-places, each bearing a pole, to the end of which is attached a bunch of straw or hemp. This is called a *Moraine*. In certain localities the pole, which has been selected some time in advance, and well peeled and dried, is called a *Mouline*. The youthful band being gathered together, they are conducted by the parents towards the neighbouring hill. At the head of the procession marches the village fiddler, behind whom come the young men and women of the locality. Having arrived at the appointed place, they set fire to the straw or hemp amidst cries of—

"Adieu, Christmas! adieu to the Kings!
You shall return in twelve months,
On a little wooden horse!"
"Adieu, Noel! adieu aux Rois!
Vous reviendrez dans douze mois,
Sur un petit cheval de bois."

The fiddler then strikes up, and the dances commence. The spectacle is very interesting to one who has witnessed it for the first time. All the neighbouring hills are illuminated by these fires,

as far as the eye can reach away in the distance the lights are seen here and there, studding the country. After a couple of hours all return to their various homes, where the festivities are kept up till past midnight and even longer.

H.R.H. THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S STABLES.

THESE stables are so well designed and compactly built that the interior accommodation is much larger than the outside appearance suggests, and the space occupied by both stabling and coach-houses is surprising. On entering the yard the first things which attract attention are its size and light, the latter being obtained by a glass roof, supported on a light iron framework. This yard is paved with wood, covered with a light coating of pitch and gravel, which gives excellent footing to horses. All round on the four sides the stabling and coach-houses are arranged, and on either side of the entrance is a room, one for saddles, the other for harness. Over the stabling there are offices, extra room for harness, haylofts, and capital accommodation for the stablemen and helpers, which are reached by a light iron staircase running up from one side of the yard. All is built of neat but plain brickwork, and it is evident that usefulness and comfort have been the chief considerations. Under this staircase is the pit for litter, which is covered by a double iron door, so arranged that it can be raised or lowered without the exertion of more strength than is required in the lifting of an ordinary wooden box lid.

The stabling, however, is the most interesting part of the building. It is separated into five distinct portions, each entering off the yard, and together capable of accommodating twenty-nine horses, in five loose boxes and twenty-four stalls, many of the latter, however, being easily converted into boxes by a simple but most effective arrangement. Everything is perfectly plain, and there is a total absence of anything approaching "Brummagem" throughout. Inside, both stalls and boxes are lined with wood to about the height of seven feet, above which pale blue tiling is used, giving a nice light, fresh appearance. The floors are laid inside the stalls and boxes with asphalt and paved with adamantine clinkers, laid herring-bone fashion, the drainage being well secured by iron gutters. The loose boxes are of the "Prince of Wales" pattern. The doors in some are made to slide. The latches are very simple, and, although opened with the greatest ease by a man, cannot be opened by a horse, however cunning he may be, and as they have no projections are not liable to be opened by accidents, such as men or horses pushing against them when passing. The woodwork, which is carried up in front about four feet high, is composed of match-boarding nicely varnished, fitted in such a manner that it can easily be renewed if worn or damaged. Above the boarding the boxes are enclosed with round iron bars to the height of seven feet, and the stalls are made to match on the same principle. Most of these stalls can be converted into loose boxes by an arrangement of the simplest character, which consists in pulling out a strong round iron bar from the heel-post, in which it works in an enclosed sheath or cylinder, and dropping the bar at the end into a socket prepared for it on the stable-wall. This is so easily done that the most careless of stablemen would scarcely neglect doing so before leaving for the night, and thus if a horse got loose no harm would be done. The mangers, hay-racks, and other fittings, are of the latest and best designs, and nothing could be better adapted for the purpose or more pleasing to the eye; the tyings in particular are very good and effective.

The saddle and harness-rooms are perhaps rather small in proportion to the stabling, but as they are arranged with great judgment, and supplied with wonderfully neat fittings, their accommodation is considerably greater than that of much larger rooms. All the brackets are made on a principle which combines the strength of iron with the advantages of wood.

The two coach-houses are very commodious, affording standing for some twelve or fourteen carriages. Every part of the building is extremely well ventilated, and the lighting is excellent; having a height of about fourteen feet, there is a roomy, airy appearance about the stables not often seen.

A SUICIDAL SCORPION.—The statement that a scorpion, when driven to bay by its enemies and unable to escape, will kill itself by a blow from its venomous sting has usually been regarded as rather mythical. A well-attested instance, however, of the suicide of the insect has lately been published by Dr. de Belleme. The writer states that, having captured a scorpion, he converged the rays of the sun on its back by means of a burning glass. The insect became furiously enraged, and finally raised its sting and struck itself, dying within half a minute afterwards.



[THE WILL AND THE WAY.]

THE GIPSY PEER; OR, A SLAVE OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

CHAPTER LIII.

Courage, my heart, we fight
For more than life, for more than love,
For liberty!

The following morning Tazoni realized how completely he was in bonds.

He awoke at an early hour—or rather was awakened by a strange din rising from the cellar and rooms below—that indescribable hum and buzz of a crowd hemmed in a small space.

Leaping from the bed with as much alacrity as his weakness and his cramped limbs would permit of, he went to the window and looked out.

It was a disagreeable morning, and the view, which consisted of a row of the backs of houses with an ultimatum of chimney-pots, was not exhilarating.

After he had taken stock of the grim prospect he opened the window and tried the iron bars.

Alas! as the man Jim had declared, they were firm and fast, and defied all his efforts at shaking them.

Baffled thus far he looked round the room for a bell, and seeing nothing in the shape of one but a long cord, frayed and tattered, which was suspended from the ceiling, he pulled that and had the satisfaction of hearing in the distance a muffled clang.

In a few minutes he heard steps ascending, and soon afterwards they stopped at the door, as the voice of the man who had acted as guide on the preceding night exclaimed:

"Well, gov'nor, what is it?"

"I want," said Tazoni, "a bath."

"There ain't such a thing in the corner," retorted the man. "What's it like?"

"Bring me a tub—anything—full of cold water," said Tazoni, firmly.

The man hesitated a moment, and Tazoni, opening the door, handed him a shilling.

Jim immediately shuffled off, and after only a reasonable delay returned with the required article.

"It's a rum thing, cold water," he said, with a shudder. "You'd better have a little hot."

But Tazoni thanked him coldly, and closing the door stripped himself for his bath.

After he had accomplished it he felt stronger and more cheerful, and, dressing himself again, prepared to descend to the large room, which he rightly judged was the common or living-room of this strange den of villany.

As he descended the rickety, dust-begrimed

staircase he was determined to keep as calmly self-possessed and cool as he had, by a strong effort, succeeded in keeping the preceding night, and with that determination strong upon him he entered the long, low room.

A strong smell of toast and coffee came to meet him as he opened the door, and when he could distinguish objects clearly, which had at first been somewhat obscured by the steam which nearly filled the apartment, he saw that the Darkmen were at their morning meal.

At the fire was an enormous kettle and utensil for coffee, from which Jim, who appeared to be cook, housekeeper and guide in one, was pouring out the stimulating beverage into tin mugs.

There was a small crowd round the fire waiting with their mugs; those who had been already supplied were seated at the table hard at work on huge slices of bread and butter and red herrings, which last seem to be universal favourites.

"Oh, here you are," said Jim, looking up, with a hot face, from his task. "You seem to be a mighty long time putting yourself into peeling. Had your bath, and enjoyed the water? We're quite a polar bear with the chill off, we are!"

And he glanced at several of the men, who had turned their faces to the new comer.

"Will yer have a cup of coffee?"

"Thank you," said Tazoni, and, with the utmost coolness, he took the tin mug which was offered to him.

"You'll find something to eat on the table," said Jim. "Make room there, will you?" he added.

Tazoni stood by the table and sipped his coffee with an attitude so easy and confident that several of the men stared at him in evident admiration.

"Been used to roughing it, mate?" asked the man of whom he had asked the question on the preceding evening.

"Yes," said Tazoni, with a grave smile. "But in the open air. This place is stifling and unhealthy. Can you not let a little air in?"

The man stared and shook his head.

"We should let something or somebody else in as well perhaps," he said, curtly.

Tazoni inclined his head.

"You seem to know something of the ways of the place," he said, taking his seat beside him. "Do you know—or rather will you tell me—how long I am likely to be kept a prisoner here?"

"Can't say—I know nothing about it. Ask Jim. If he won't tell you nobody else can."

Tazoni smiled again, and in silence scanned the faces of the motley crew.

Presently, breakfast being over, short pipes made their appearance.

The men lounged round the fire, some of them remaining, however, at the table, talking or playing cards.

Tazoni fell to pacing the long room, battling with his impatience and feverish excitement.

To-day was Sunday; to-morrow would be Monday—the Monday on which Lord Raymond would practise his villany upon some innocent girl, perhaps Lurli herself—the Monday upon which he, Tazoni, had sworn to baulk the scoundrel and prevent the marriage which he had heard planned.

Monday was within a few hours of him, and here he was caged like a wild animal—helpless, tied, as it were, hand and foot, and having left no clue to his whereabouts.

How he chafed and fretted no one could describe, but outwardly he only looked grave and troubled, and the crew of tatterdemalions looked on and wondered at his calm.

They had seen men driven nearly mad under the strain he was enduring, and rave out when they thought of friends enduring all the agonies of uncertainty and suspense.

They had known strong men weep like children and implore on their knees for permission to write a line to their nearest and dearest to say that they were alive and safe.

But this man did not descend to tears or supplications, seemed scarce daunted by the treachery of which he was a victim, and walked to and fro, silent and self-possessed.

His manly, stoical bearing had its effect, and when he came towards the fire they made way for him as if by common consent.

The morning passed; dinner time arrived.

A large leg of mutton was carved up for the better class of boarders—or prisoners, as the case might be—and a quantity of potatoes, suet puddings and bread for those who were unable to afford the luxury of the joint or whose captors and kidnappers had lodged them on short commons.

As soon as the meal was over most of the men extended themselves about the floor and slept.

Three or four, however, remained awake as guards, and whenever Tazoni approached the door one of them got up and approached near enough to prevent his escape.

Towards evening he was almost mad with suspense and restraint, and, to while away the time and divert his thoughts, he seated himself near the fire and began a conversation with an old man who had not opened his lips all day.

He made room for Tazoni to seat himself on the settle, and Tazoni thanked him.

"You look tired," he said, with a grave smile.

"Are you, like myself, kept in this place against your will?"

The old man looked up and then round the room.

"Yes," he said, with a bitter smile. "It's incredible, isn't it? I thought such a thing impossible in England, in police-watched London. But it is only too true. Here I am as fairly kept a prisoner as any the Bastille ever held."

"You bear it well," said Tazoni.

"Yes, now," said the old man, significantly. "But I did not when I was first brought here. I had not your power of self-control, and I went nearly mad; but I am tired of that now and I can wait patiently—because I am obliged to—until the ruffians let me out."

With the evidence before his face, Tazoni had to wait a moment to realize the fact.

"And was within sound of St. Paul's," he said, "I heard it all this morning."

"Ay," said the old man, "and within reach of the Old Bailey, the Houses of Parliament, and the Queen's Bench. Sir, if I had been told that such a place as this existed in London before I was brought here I should have treated the information as a romantic, far-fetched falsehood. But I could readily believe now that there are worse horrors than this thieves' kitchen which the legal and police world know nothing of."

"How came you to be brought here?" asked Tazoni.

"I am—or intended to be—a witness," said the old man, "against a burglar at the Old Bailey. I was one of the principal witnesses, and should no doubt have brought the criminal to punishment. Two days before the trial I received a letter purporting to come from a solicitor requesting me to wait upon him in respect to my evidence. I went to the address given, suspecting nothing, entered a man, was seized, gagged and blindfolded, and conveyed here in a cab, and here I shall remain until the trial is over, I suppose, or longer—Heaven alone knows!"

"But," said Tazoni, "it—it is incredible! You can punish the criminal when you gain your liberty. The crime is too audacious!"

"Not at all," said the old man, with a bitter smile. "You often hear of people mysteriously disappearing, do you not? Well, to every case you hear of there are twenty you do not. The friends of a missing man often hear that he has committed some crime, and are afraid to give publicity to his flight. Others are only too willing to lose them, and others receive letters—forgeries of course—purporting to come from the missing man, and giving false causes for his absence. As to punishing these villains, how can you do so, when you have no clue to their identity, do not see the persons who capture you and carry you off, and could not, to save your life, lead a policeman to this den?"

"Great Heaven, it is only too true!" exclaimed Tazoni.

The old man smiled.

"You see," he said, "I have thought over the subject a great deal; there was nothing else to do here. But are you a witness, as they call it, also?"

"No," said Tazoni.

And very guardedly he gave an account of his capture.

The old man sighed.

"Of course I do not understand the nature of your case," he said, "but I admire the way in which you bear the astounding calamity. I wish us both a speedy deliverance."

"Amen," said Tazoni.

And so moved was he by indignation, despair, suspense, and rage, that he was half determined to seize the great iron poker and make a sally for the door, beating down all who stood in his way; but a glance at the villainous faces and sturdy frames of some of the men persuaded him to wait his time with the best patience he could.

So the day passed, and at night he took his candle and went up to his room more like a madman inwardly than the calm, resigned individual he seemed.

On the morrow his misery was increased tenfold. It is not too much to say that he would have given his life for that day's freedom.

But he was a prisoner close and firm, and, though he watched with the unwearying vigilance of a lynx for the slightest chance of escape, none presented itself.

Many times during the day his hands itched to fly to the throats of some of the scoundrels who kept watch upon him, but he managed to restrain himself, knowing that all attempts at escape by violence must fail, and that only by lulling their watchfulness to sleep could he ever hope to get free of their clutches.

So he waited, and the days rolled on and on. He got thinner, worn with anxiety, and less patient.

The men slunk out of his path as he paced to and fro with his strong hands crossed behind him and

his bloodshot eyes staring before him; and Jim once muttered:

"I wish Luke 'ud take this customer off my books, for I don't like the looks of him."

All day long his thoughts—almost frenzied now—veered between his imprisonment, his love for Florence and the fate of Lurli, and all day long, when he was not rapt in his reveries, he was watching.

And at last his watching was rewarded.

He saw something that gave him an idea of escape.

One morning, some weeks after the evening on which he had been brought into the den, one of the men broke a leg off the long form, and, amidst much swearing at the mishap, Jim shuffled off to get a tool-box.

The man who had broken it went to work at repairing it with a clumsiness which provoked the laughter of his companions, and he was almost about to throw down the hammer and nails with an imprecation when Tazoni stepped up and said:

"You go the wrong way to work, my friend; let me try," and he took the hammer from his hands.

The man stepped back, and Tazoni, with a small ring of spectators, set about making the form whole again.

While he was so employed his eyes were greedily scanning the contents of the box, and at last they flashed with eagerness as they rested upon a small file lying amongst the other rubbish.

To get that file and secret it was a task to which he set himself immediately.

But how to do it with a downy pale of eyes watching his movements?

He tried to cover the box from their view by changing his position, but vainly; he attempted to jerk the file out in examining for some nails, but it stuck obstinately, and would not be moved out of its position.

At last he hit upon a bold ruse.

Suddenly, and with every appearance of accident, he slipped the clasp on to his hand and made a slight incision.

"Hullo, look at your hand, master!" said one of the men.

"No matter," said Tazoni, hastily, and, taking his handkerchief from his pocket and wrapping it round his hand, he went on with his work.

"One more nail," he said, tilting up the form, and he plunged his hand into the box, picked up a nail, and with it the file, which he covered with his handkerchief.

Then he deftly knooked in the nail, dropped the form, straightened his back and turned away.

"Thank ye," said the man. "Quite a carpenter, mate! Have you out your hand much?"

"No," said Tazoni; "not enough to need the handkerchief," and as he spoke he unwound it from his hand and put it into his pocket, conveying the precious little file with it.

Anxiously he watched while Jim carried the box off, feeling assured that the tool would be missed, but the man shuffled off unsuspecting, and Tazoni turned to the fire with a breath of relief, and, what was more, a gleam of hope within his despairing, tortured heart.

At night he ascended to his room, and at once threw himself upon the rough pallet.

If he meant to work his way out of the den he knew that he should require all his strength and presence of mind, and he determined to harvest them carefully.

When quiet had settled upon the lower regions he rose, and, carefully opening the window, which he greased with his candle, he felt for the thinnest bar, and set to work filing at the bottom, wrapping a towel round the iron to muffle the sound, and pausing at intervals to ascertain if his employment had roused any one of his numerous guards.

Towards morning the iron bar was nearly out through. Five minutes' more work with the priceless file and there would be room enough for him to squeeze through on to the window-sill.

What he was next to do, having reached that position, he scarcely knew, but the mere idea of that amount of freedom sent the blood coursing through his veins.

During the day he maintained his usual gloomy aspect, and paced to and fro with unceasing monotony, to lull any suspicions that might have arisen.

At night he trod the dirty stairs towards his room with a violently beating heart, and waited with impatience that amounted to mental torture for the silence which denoted that the thieves had retired to their slumber.

When that silence came he set to work tearing up the bedclothes into strips, and twisting them into a good stout sort of rope.

He added the bell-rope and the window-sashes to increase the length, and then, fastening an end to the bed-post, tried the rope yard by yard.

He decided that it would bear his weight if he did not give it a sudden jerk, and, growing more hope-

ful every moment, took out his file and severed the last portion of the bar.

Then with the greatest caution he dragged the bedstead and chest of drawers to the door, and so made an effectual barricade.

"Now," he muttered, "if I should be interrupted by a visitor he must wait until I am not at home."

When all was ready, when he had taken off his boots to give his feet more freedom and buttoned his coat tightly round him, he wrenched the iron bar from its fastening at the top by using the lower end of the bar as a lever, and, having made the required door to freedom, dashed forward and looked out and downwards.

It was a dark night, and the only lights which lit up the seeming precipice into which he looked were those proceeding from the windows of the houses whose backs faced the main which he was still confined.

There were several high walls and steep, precipitous sides of houses, all of which would sock any attempt he might make to scale them.

But, nothing daunted, though the prospect had sufficient unattractiveness to daunt a man by no means a coward, Tazoni fastened the rope to one of the bars, tied the broken bar to the stairhead, and carefully lowered it out of the window.

He waited with an anxious heart to hear it come in contact with the bottom of the yard, but the bar was not intercepted in its descent, and evidently the rope was not long enough to reach the ground.

"Never mind," he muttered, "I must drop; the distance cannot be far out of my reckoning."

Then, with a moment's hesitation, but with all eyes, he stepped on to the window-sill, and, firmly grasping his rope, stood for a moment looking down.

To a man possessed of one degree less of Tazoni's marvellous courage the position would have been one of extreme horror—balancing on a narrow ledge at a distance from the earth, and looking downwards into nearly pitch darkness!

But Tazoni came of a race that knew not fear, and a genuine feeling of exhilaration and excitement thrilled him as he felt the night air wafted against his face and the rope drawn tightly in his hand.

Then, after that moment's pause, he gently released a foot at a time, wound it round his rope and commenced the descent.

He swung, at first, to and fro, most horribly, but before he had descended many feet he acquired the knack of keeping himself straight, and so, inch by inch, neared the end of his tether.

As he descended past the windows of his prison he saw a few lights burning, and shadows passing across the blinds, and it was with an anxiety indescribable that he swung down within a few inches perhaps of his gaolers, the glass only separating him from their grasp.

At last, with a sigh of relief, he felt his feet touch the bar.

Then he sat astride and rested a moment. When he looked down he saw that he had still a good drop to perform, and that he should descend in the small paved yard of a court round which rose three walls, the house forming the fourth.

He was thankful now that he had taken the precaution to remove his boots. Had he not done so they would have clattered on the pavement in his fall and doubtless aroused the men of the Corer.

Clearing himself of the rope and unfastening the bar, which he intended keeping as a weapon of defence, he dropped as lightly as possible into the courtyard and fell upon his feet and hands.

In an instant he had regained a standing position, and, with the bar in his hand, ran to the wall and looked round for some means of ascent.

There was none that he could see.

But nothing seemed to daunt him that night, and with a hearty goodwill he struck out with his crowbar a small hole for his feet, and, clenching the bar in his teeth, gained a footing, and by dint of attacking like a bat and plunging like a monkey to the extreme edge of the coping, gained the top, upon which he sat breathless and triumphant.

But his triumph was exceedingly short-lived, for his eyes, which were turned towards the house from which he had so daringly escaped, saw certain signs of danger.

The wind, which had risen suddenly, was throwing his rope against the windows.

The hard knots might strike against a pane and give the alarm, for Tazoni knew well how great a sound a slight concussion on glass produces.

Almost as the fear arose the cause occurred. Bump went the rope against one of the windows. A light shone almost instantly.

The window was thrown up, and a man's face—Jim's—glared out.

Tazoni knew that the house was roused, for in one minute afterwards he heard the opening of a door and saw the gleam of a dark lantern flash upon the wall.

He dropped in an instant on the other side of the wall.

He had not yet effected his escape, for he was pursued.

CHAPTER LIV.

Lend me strength, oh, ye gods,
To tread the stony path of iron duty.
Thy altar ways are set with thorns
That pierce the heart.

LORD DARTEAGLE, though greatly relieved by Lord Raymond's proposal for Florence's hand, was still ill at ease and anxious.

Never had the young man shown at a greater disadvantage than at that moment.

His ill-concealed smile of self-assurance, his patronising way of offering himself, or rather demanding Florence, and his cool, business-like way of making the whole affair a bargain, filled the earl with vague feelings of disgust.

Yet the necessity was pressing, and like many another man the earl bowed down before it.

The following morning he sent up to ask Florence if he could speak to her before he went out, and Florence sent word back that she would come down to the library.

But the earl, chameleon in small things, as is his class, immediately returned an answer intimating that he would wait upon her, and so a few minutes afterwards slowly ascended the stairs and knocked at the door of her boudoir.

Florence opened the door, kissed him, and, linking her arm in his, led him to her own favourite seat.

"Dear papa," she said, "why did you not let me come to you? This is the first time you have entered the room, is it not?"

"Yes, my dear," said the earl; "it is a pretty room, but none too pretty."

"And now you have come to scold me about the milliner's bills, or my neglect of the piano, or the harp, or what is it, dear? It would be quite a treat to hear you scold. You have never said a cross word to me since I can remember," she added, tenderly.

"Ner ever shall," said the earl.

And he looked up at her with a reflection of her love.

As he looked up his face clouded.

"Florence," he said, "you have been looking pale lately. You look as if you had had no sleep all night. Are you unwell?"

"No, papa," said Florence, flushing slightly, but relapsing into her old pallor the next moment. "No, I am quite well; a little weary sometimes, that is all. We are all that—you too, dear. See how tired you look now."

And she pointed with a smile to the mirror before which he sat.

He looked up and sighed.

"Men should be weary; they have great things to do, but for a lassie like yourself, Florence, heart-free, care-free, life should be all smiles."

"It is not," said Florence, gravely, and thinking as she spoke, "if you only knew, only knew!"

"Then it should be their loved ones' task to make it so," said the earl.

"Never mind my sour looks, dear," she said, crossing him. "But tell me why you wanted to see me this morning."

"Sit here," said the earl.

And as she seated herself beside him he took her hand.

"Florence, I am in great trouble just now, and should have been in worse but for some succour which you, I think, should have the meed of praise for."

"I?" said Florence. "But what of your trouble? I saw that something had happened, but I did not like to worry you with questions."

"My trouble is the usual one—money," said the earl. "I have been foolish enough to join in the race for wealth—"

"Which we did not want," said Florence, softly.

"Which we did not want, and yet which I coveted!" resumed the earl, sadly. "In that race I have been running frightful risks. A mine, of which I am director— But there, Florence, spare me the details. They are grieved into my heart, and start thence to turn my nights into a season of remorse. Enough that we—Raymond—will be ruined if aid do not reach us."

Florence uttered no word of sympathy, but the pressure of her hand conveyed volumes.

"That aid has I believe come to us, but it comes hampered, Florence—hampered, I believe, most happily."

Florence caught some indefinite fear from his words, and for the first time turned her eyes with a fearful, questioning look upon her face.

He avoided her gaze, which she knew was a bad sign, and Florence dropped her eyes to the ground, waiting for she knew not what.

"Florence," continued the earl, "I was compelled to ask help of the Northliffes. True I could not have done so with less pain of any other name, but it cost me something to ask even them."

"Of the Northliffes?" said Florence, in a quiet, constrained voice. "Of Lord Northcliffe do you mean?"

"No, of Raymond," said the earl.

Florence's blood turned cold, but she made no remark, and the earl continued:

"You will understand now my anxiety to see him. I knew he could help me, if not at the present at some future time."

"You asked him?" said Florence. "And what did he reply?"

"That he would do so," replied the earl; "and, Florence, he took that opportunity to ask a boon of me—a boon it would cost me something to grant to any one, but which I would sooner grant to him, to one of his house, than to any one."

"That boon?" said Florence.

"Was yourself, my child," said the earl.

"I thought so," said Florence, in a low, constrained voice.

The earl shuffled a little uneasily.

"You—you do not tell me that you do not love him?" he said.

"Is that the question?" said Florence, turning to him with so weary and despairful a smile. "Is that the question? Tell me, did he not make my consent a condition, my lord?"

The earl turned pale.

She had never addressed him as my lord since she had left the nursery.

"In some measure, yes," he replied. "But remember you are in no wise bound. It is for your free consideration, Florence. If—if—I had thought you did not love him—"

Florence stopped him with a gesture.

"Do not let that influence us," she said. "Let me understand what I have to confront. Lord Raymond Hurley will lend us this money you require if I consent to be his wife?"

"You put it harshly—unnecessarily harshly," said the earl. "He has promised to lend the money as unconditionally as he can do so. He cannot get the money until he marries."

Florence turned pale as death.

She saw that there was not only no hope but that there would be no delay.

"Until he marries. He reminded me of that when I asked him for the loan, and seized the opportunity of asking for your hand. If—if—"

"If I refuse," said Florence, "he cannot lend you the money."

"Exactly," said the earl. "But do not let that influence you, my child. Do as you would wish to do. Take him or refuse him. What is Earlscourt to me!" he added, but very sorrowfully, "to your happiness? I would rather that you remained unmarried all your life than that you should sacrifice yourself for me!"

Florence looked straight before her.

"Duty! duty! duty!" she murmured. "Duty to your house, duty to him who gave you life! Duty to yourself!"

And as the words echoed through her aching, sorrowful heart the noble girl determined to sacrifice herself to sink the past into the waters of Letho—to sacrifice herself to a life of misery for her father and her family honour!

"I know you would," she said. "No need to tell me that. But Earlscourt is dear to you, and it is dear to me. Our unblemished name is dearer still to both of us. Lord Raymond can save both, and he shall do it!"

"My brave girl! But—but—" said the earl, looking into her face as he held her in his arms.

"Are you sure of yourself? Do you love him?"

"I am sure of myself," said Florence, evading the other more awful question. "Do not fear for me! I shall save the house, papa, and be remembered in after years as a woman who deserved well of posterity!"

There was a pause of a few minutes, then she spoke again.

"Papa, I have one thing to ask," she said.

"What is it, my child?" said the earl, eager to grant her anything after her concession.

"That the engagement shall be kept quite secret. I do not wish it made public; nor the marriage either."

The earl looked surprised.

"Why not, my darling?" he said.

"I—I have a reason," said Florence, a slight crimson flushing her pale face. "I could not put it in words, and you would not understand it were I to do so. But you will grant me that?"

"Yes, if Raymond will," said Lord Dartecagle, with a smile. "He must answer that."

"I make it a condition," said Florence, with cold pride.

"Then I am sure he will say yes, as he would to a greater one," replied the earl.

Florence inclined her head.

"Does mamma know of this?" she said, presently.

"No," said the earl; "I would not tell her until I saw you, so that you might feel quite free."

"Thank you," she said, kissing him with a stifled "That was good of you."

At that instant her maid knocked at the door. "Lord Raymond is waiting in the drawing-room my lord."

The earl glanced at Florence.

"You will come down presently?" he said, hesitatingly.

"Yes," said Florence, firmly. "I will come down presently."

Then the earl kissed her once more and left the room.

No sooner had he gone than Florence fell upon the couch and hid her face in her hands.

What a horrible flood of thoughts passed over her soul!

To be married to Lord Raymond!

It was too dreadful to be realized.

And yet she could not shrink. How could she?

She would have gone to the stake for her father, she would have given her life cheerfully to win an hour's happiness for him.

Now she must give more than her life, and she would do it.

But it was bitter, as let that single cry of despair denote:

"Oh, my love, my love! Farewell for ever!"

Farewell to Tazoni, the gipsy, the poet, the hero!

Farewell to all the hopes that made life worth living!

Farewell! Farewell!

She smoothed her hair, composed her face—she could not make it look less unhappy and pallid—and went slowly but calmly into the drawing-room.

The earl, who was talking to Lord Raymond, rose as she entered, and, saying in a nervous emotion, "Raymond wants to see you this morning, not me, Florence," left the room.

As Florence entered, pale, dignified, with a quiet air of supreme calm and resignation, the base spirit of the coward and arch plotter quailed before her.

But he came forward and took the hand which she extended, and shook it nervously.

"How do you do, Florence? I'm—I'm glad to see you," he answered, fingering his eyeglass. "I dare say the earl has told you what—that is—why I wanted to see you, if you'd be good enough to see me?"

"My father has told me," said Florence, so slowly and calmly that his courage sank lower at each word.

"And—and—how happy you'd make me if you said 'yes'?" he said.

"No, he did not tell me that," said Florence.

"He told me that you would lend him certain money if I would consent to be your wife."

"Yes, that's the same thing," said Raymond, eagerly.

"Do you think so?" said Florence, with that fierce scorn which seems to express itself.

"Yes; but not exactly. You know we can't get this money until I'm married, and as, of course, I want to marry you, why—why—I thought I'd better say so plainly."

Florence waited.

"And—and—if you'd say you would marry me, why we could have the money, and—and we should be very happy."

"You think so?" said Florence.

"Oh, I am sure of it," he said, with a smile that was hideous in the girl's eyes. "Come, you needn't look so grave over it," he added, plucking up courage.

"Say you'll come to terms, and let us have done with it. We've always been given to each other by everybody as long as I can remember, and it wouldn't be right to disappoint them, would it? Will you be my wife?"

"I will be your wife," said Florence. "Is that the only question you have to put to me?"

"What—what other question?" he asked.

"No other," she said, "or you would have put it. Lord Raymond, we are speaking plainly this morning; it is fitting that we should. You know what I give you when I say that I will be your wife?"

"No," he murmured.

"I will tell you," she said, growing paler and paler. "A hand without a heart, an obedience without love. I do not love you; I never can. I have some reason to fear and suspect you now, I may have better reason to hate and loathe you in the future. This is what I give you when I promise to be your wife!"

"You do!" he said, with a cunning look upon his face. "Fear, suspect, hate! Florence, I'll take you at your word, and I won't ask for any more. I will be contented with what you offer."

"You will?" she said.

"I will," he said. "And there's my hand on it. I can make you like me when we are married I dare say. And," he added to himself with malignant satisfaction, "I shall have put it out of your power to do me any harm. A wife may suspect her hus-

band as much as she likes, but she can't very well split upon him."

"Then I say 'yes,'" said Florence. "And let the future answer for it!"

So, while Tazoni was bound hand and foot in Darkman's Corner, Lady Florence Dartleagle and Lord Raymond Hursley had plighted troth.

(To be continued.)

OLD CHILDREN.

A COMPLAINT often made by close observers of human nature is that there are no more children; they are all matured into middle-aged people. The complaint has been pictorially illustrated very well by *Punch*, who has given us the wise, blasé, and fashionable young-old little people in great variety. Charles Augustus, aged eight, is represented as speaking in languid terms of the latest favourite actress, and saying to his companion, aged seven and a half, "You should have seen Ellen Tree"; and the juvenile politician of Belgraveia is depicted with his infantile brow knitted while he speaks of Disraeli as "a muff." Our reports of fashionable life occasionally give us glimpses of children's parties where the little girls wear point-lace and dance, and the boys appear in evening dress, and flirt desperately.

On the whole, we do not wonder that sentimental people dolefully declare that there are no more children. Here and there, in well-ordered and happy homes, may be young folks who have not exhausted life at the age of ten years, to whom the pantomime is a rare treat, and for whom Parisian bon-bons still have a breathless charm. We are glad to believe that there are some sensible parents who try to keep a few sweets of life for the gratification of the young ones when they shall be older than they are now. But it is nevertheless true that childlike children are comparatively few. We have plenty of unfortunates who are required to "act like little ladies," or "walk like little gentlemen"; but the brood of hearty children is so small that a child-loving visitor grows sorrowful in the midst of the sad little manikins of the present age.

This holiday season, with its bright show of gifts for the young, very strikingly illustrates the disappearance of the children. The boys are taught engineering, architecture, and mathematics, by means of what are called "mathematical toys." His box of blocks is no longer a thing of childish delight; it brings him the binomial theorem or a model of the Parthenon. He does not sail a sloop in the pond; he stands with languid pride on the bank while his toy side-wheel steamer is propelled over the mimic wave on purely scientific principles. He cannot whittle out a windmill or construct a jack-o'-lantern, but he can make a drawing-room bow and speak some execrable French.

His little sister, who is proud of wearing a wider sash than her next-door infant neighbour, despises her rag-babies and the toys of the past generation. Her dolls—for dolls she has—are ball-room belles, dressed in the height of fashion, or they are models of the latest style of walking and carriage dress. The miraculous invention of the doll that said "papa" and "mamma" no longer thrills our child-world. Dolls that walk, dolls that waltz with male dolls, and dolls that wear eye-glasses and a certain high-bred hauteur, are most numerous in the market. Nay, having portrayed through these puppets all the mystery of life, the purveyors for the children have even produced widow dolls, and the curious visitor to the toy-shops may find a rosy waxen image clad in all the luxury of woe, with widow's weeds and grief-shadowed handkerchief, and personifying to the unhappy little possessor that subdued elation which some people think should bloom beneath the widow's cap. From the cradle to the grave these young-old children receive their quick impressions. They absorb the whole mystery of life before they are ten years old.

It is a pity that the world should be thus defrauded of the charm of childhood. The infantile grace and wise unconsciousness of children make the oldest of us young again. We cannot afford to lose the children with their simple sports and fleeting delusions. The infant that peoples rags and tags with living, sentient souls, or the boy that sees a fairy boat in his rude carving, is a perfect bud of the wonderful flower that is to come. Those who destroy their fond illusions and force into the child's hand a token of maturity do great harm. They are like those rude florists who tear open the half-blown flower, and give us the rose without its perfume. The little girl who glorifies bits of broken crockery into the finest china service, or animates her rag-baby with a real soul, is wronged when Sévres and a "widow" doll are put into her hands. Give the young folks the old-fashioned toys that may perish with the using and make nobody bankrupt. Let the little ones romp and tear their clothes; it is a thou-

sand-fold better than "deportment" and fashionable attire. In spite of the unnatural repression of parents child nature will try to make its way. The curled darlings who mope and pine in drawing-room and parlour are prematurely unhappy, as well as prematurely old. Sorrow and disappointment come soon enough; let us keep our children young and gay while we can.

EXPECTATIONS.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE rescue of Charlot Lyle from the living death to which he had consigned her was for Charles Vernon the beginning of an utter defeat—the prelude of the end.

He arrived in London in excellent spirits, and sought his hotel. His first act after entering his room was to examine the daily papers that had been issued during the nine days of his absence, in the hope and expectation of reading the obituary notice of Sir Mark Trebasil. But no such item appeared. There was, however, in a court newspaper a brief announcement that "Sir Mark Trebasil, who had recently suffered a stroke of paralysis, and had been very near death, was upon the high road to recovery, and was even able to drive out daily. The wealthy Cornish baronet, the journal added, 'is advised by his able physicians to try change of climate, and he will go abroad immediately.'"

The anathemas which Vernon uttered on perusing this notice were both loud and deep.

"What can Gannard be thinking of?" he exclaimed, savagely. "The dose he gave was too small, or else those infatuated doctors have inadvertently given him medicine that has served him as an antidote. Why doesn't Gannard give him another dose? I must attend to it at once."

He had three or four hours on hand before the departure of the night express, and concluded to employ this interval in a visit to Kensington—to Mrs. Park.

"Park must be dead," he thought. "I'll call on the widow and make sure."

He took a hansom and performed the journey. Mrs. Grigs, the landlady, met him at the door and invited him to enter the house. In response to his inquiries after his cousin she looked surprised, and exclaimed:

"Haven't you heard, sir—"

"He is dead, then? I supposed so."

"Oh, no, he's not dead," said Mrs. Grigs, "but he's gone."

"Gone!"

"Yes, sir. He finished his picture for Sir Mark Trebasil, you see, sir, and a week ago Mrs. Park went to Sir Mark's place in Cornwall, taking the picture with her. It seems, though never reading the newspapers she didn't know it, but Sir Mark had been very ill and was just convalescent. He consented to see her, and took the picture and gave her a cheque for the two hundred and fifty pounds that was due on it. And that was not all. He treated her as if she was a princess. He asked her about her husband, and he said he thought Mr. Park might be helped. And he gave her a letter to a great London doctor, and the day after Mrs. Park came home the doctor came, and says he can cure Mr. Park, although it may take a year or two, and although he will always be delicate."

Vernon's face assumed a grayish hue.

"Where are the Parks now?" he asked, hoarsely. "They left here yesterday, sir, along of Sir Mark Trebasil's land steward, who came for them in a carriage, and Mr. Park was carried away in a litter. Sir Mark Trebasil has given them out and out, as a free gift, a cottage at Fulham, with an acre of ground around it, and no end of flowers and trees. And Mrs. Park cried and laughed, and Mr. Park was that happy as if he was in heaven. And Sir Mark has settled on them a clear income of three hundred pounds a year, and agreed to defray the great doctor's bills. Mr. and Mrs. Park are glad as birds, sir, in spring time. You may be sure that when Mr. Park does get well he'll be as temperate a man as lives in England."

Vernon turned away and went back to his hotel, amazed and bewildered.

"It looks as if my luck had turned," he said to himself. "I feel as if all was going wrong. Has the whole thing got to be done over again?"

He journeyed by the night train to Cornwall, arriving at Langworth early the next morning, and proceeded direct to Waldgrove Castle. His first inquiry was for Sir Mark, and he was told that the baronet was out driving. Vernon went up to his own room.

He found Gannard engaged in packing his—the valet's own travelling-bag. There was a haggardness about the fellow's usually sleek and smooth

visage that indicated that something was vastly wrong. He looked up as Vernon entered, and went on with his work.

"What's the matter?" asked the employer. "What are you doing, Gannard?"

"Preparing to leave," was the answer, in a husky voice that showed how deeply the valet was troubled. "Read that telegram there on the table. It's not five minutes since I got it."

Vernon picked up the slip of paper with its official heading, and read these lines:

"They traced the child and took possession of it last night. Molly has blown on us all. I am in hiding. Shall start by first train for foreign parts."

This message was addressed to Gannard, and signed with the name of his brother-in-law.

"If Molly has blown on us all, it's time for me to start too," said the valet. "I shall cut it!"

Vernon sat down utterly unnerved.

"Sir Mark is getting well," he said, tremulously. "Harold Park is recovering, the child is found—only one point is secure. Miss Lyle is safe!"

"Do you know where Sir Mark is gone?" asked Gannard. "I heard him give the order to the coachman. 'To Blair Abbey,' he said. He leaves tomorrow for the Continent, and has gone, I daresay, to tell his wife he'll never trouble her again."

"There's no danger that they will come to an understanding," said Vernon, "but I'll go over at once and see Mrs. Malverne. It will go hard with me if I don't manage to keep Sir Mark's jealousy up to the sticking point. As to Molly's blowing what harm can it do? Miss Stair isn't going to prosecute anybody. She can't, without revealing the fact that the child is her own, and that would endanger its safety. You are getting into a tantrum for nothing, Gannard. Who's the coward now? I tell you Miss Stair'll hush the whole matter and prosecute no one."

Acting upon this conviction, which impressed Gannard as being based upon truth, Vernon made a few changes in his toilet, and hastened to Blair Abbey.

Sir Mark Trebasil was already there.

He had arrived half an hour before, had alighted and sent up his card to Miss Stair. Mrs. Bittle, Joliette's confidential waiting-woman, had descended to the drawing-room, informing the baronet that the lady declined to see him.

"She must see me!" declared Sir Mark, sternly. "I desire a private interview with her, and will go up to her boudoir."

And, paying no heed to Mrs. Bittle's remonstrances and opposition, he ascended the stair and stalked into Joliette's boudoir, stern and haughty of face, with the look of a Nemesis in his steel-blue eyes.

"She is not here," said Mrs. Bittle. "She is not fit to see any one; she is ill."

"Ill!" he repeated. "I must see her. I expected that she would decline to see me, but I shall see her if I have to force my way into her very presence. I am not come to harm your mistress, my good woman. Your household cannot wonder at my presence in this room, for your lady often receives her friends here. Ask Miss Stair to come to me!"

"I will not!" cried Mrs. Bittle, determinedly.

"Then I shall go to her!"

The baronet moved quickly forward and passed into the dressing-room before the woman could prevent him. The room was empty. The wardrobe door was open, and the secret door beyond was ajar.

Before Mrs. Bittle had noticed this fact Sir Mark glided to the wardrobe, glanced through the openings into the secret room, and entered the latter.

"Heaven be merciful!" exclaimed Mrs. Bittle, in a whisper, absolutely overwhelmed. "What is to be the end? The worst has happened. My lady will care for nothing now!"

Sir Mark stood within the secret nursery and stared around him. The fire was burning in the grate, the lights were glowing softly. An empty cradle, some broken toys, a baby's shoe, these were scattered about the great warm, pleasant chamber. Upon a couch at the farther side Joliette, in a white cashmere dressing-gown, was lying asleep.

Sir Mark crossed the floor softly and looked upon her. How fragile she seemed! So thin, so pale, so woeful, even in her sleep. The heavy lids fringed with long, black, curling lashes lay upon the clear olive cheeks; the black hair all unloosed lay about her like a dusky cloud. How beautiful she was! How innocent she looked! An angel could not seem more guileless.

His gaze disturbed her. She turned restlessly, uttered a low moan, and opened her eyes. Then she sprang up affrighted and indignant, the red blood staining her face, her eyes flashing fire.

"You are surprised at seeing me, Joliette," said Sir Mark, calmly. "I do not wonder. I found my way here. I am come to bid you a last farewell."

"You should have sent for me. You should have seen me in the drawing-room. Go below immediately, Sir Mark."

"Is this your boy's nursery?" demanded the baronet, unheeding her passionate outburst. "These were once the abbot's rooms. You have attached them to your own, I see, and you keep your son near you. That is his cradle—those his toys? And this is where your lover comes. I know it all."

"You insult me—"

Sir Mark smiled pitifully.

"My poor Joliette!" he said, very gently. "Our marriage was a frightful mistake. I am sorry for you, but it is in my power to make your burden lighter. I am come to-day, not in anger, but in sorrow, and with full and tender sympathy with your unhappiness. I am come to bid you farewell for ever."

Joliette looked at him with dilating eyes.

"You are going away?" she asked, in a whisper.

"Yes. You will never see me again. I have conquered the pride that made me refuse you a divorce. When I am gone, Joliette, I desire you to seek your freedom at the divorce court. My lawyer will be instructed to secretly assist your cause. I shall not put in an appearance, and you can make your plea what you will. It may be best to accuse me of desertion. You will gain your suit, you will marry the man you love, and may Heaven bless you always and give you happiness!"

"This is very sudden—"

"I have no reproaches to utter, Joliette. Poor girl, your desperation must indeed have been great, or you would never have sought to murder me—"

"To murder you?"

"I refer to the poison enclosed in your letter—the poison that so nearly killed me—"

"Poison? I don't know what you mean!"

Joliette's amazement was so genuine as to shake her husband's faith in her guilt.

"Did you not enclose a subtle poison in the letter you sent me?" he demanded. "But, of course, you will deny it—"

"Of course I will! Poison! Why, what do you think me? Mrs. Bittle saw me write and seal the letter, and my groom gave the letter into the hands of Charles Vernon."

"Of Vernon? I had not heard that before. Of Vernon?"

"Whatever my faults, I am no poisoner. Sir Mark, shall I swear to you that I am innocent? By Heaven I have never sought your death. A poisoner! And you could believe me that?"

"I did believe it!" replied Sir Mark. "Who could have put the poison in the letter? Not Vernon? And yet—"

He studied Joliette's face with keen, relentless eyes. There was no guilt there. Her great black eyes, full of solemn truth, met his unflinchingly. In that long, keen gaze he read her inmost soul, and he knew her innocent of the awful crime he had laid to her charge.

And, remembering much that he had heard of late concerning Vernon's pretensions to succeed him, and certain things against Vernon which Mrs. Park had told him, he suspected his cousin of having been the secret seeker after his death.

"Sir Mark," cried Joliette, "you thought me a secret poisoner—a murderer. Was it because you so misjudged me that you wrought your vengeance upon me? Oh, Sir Mark, give me back my boy—my son! Give him back to me, and I will bless you till I die! Where is he? I am his mother, I have the best right to him. As you hope for mercy at the last great day, have mercy on me now. Give me back my boy."

She flung herself upon her knees before him, her passionate young voice freighted with an anguish that stirred his soul to its lowest depths.

"Your boy, Joliette—"

"You stole him from me. You have been well revenged, Mark. I do not sleep at night—I am going mad! I think I hear his cooing voice, his merry laugh, when all is emptiness around me. I think I feel his kisses, the pressure of his head on my bosom, and I put out my arms and grasp the empty air. I am going mad, Mark! Give me back my boy, or I shall die!"

Sir Mark started back, amazed.

Before he could speak there came the sound of a door opening and shutting, the tramp of feet, and then Meggy Dunn, with the lost child in her arms, came bounding into the room.

She had ascended by the secret staircase, easily effecting an entrance at the postern-door in the daytime without being seen by any one of the abbey servants.

Mr. Weston came behind her, beaming with delight.

"Here's your boy, my lady!" cried the lawyer.

"We brought him in by daylight, running all the

risk of discovery. I would not even telegraph. We meant to take you by surprise. Here he is, safe and well, bright and—"

With a wild scream Joliette had sprung to her feet and swooped upon her boy. But when she had him safe in her arms she fell to the floor and fainted dead away.

Mrs. Bittle and Meggy Dunn hastened to minister to the unconscious mother and wailing child.

Sir Mark took the wondering lawyer aside and questioned him.

Good Mr. Weston, who had never ceased to hope that the husband and wife might be happily reunited, answered him fully and frankly.

"The child was stolen ten days ago," he stated, "from the arms of its nurse. I had a detective from Scotland Yard on the track at once. There were Langworth men also at work. They traced a woman to London, a woman with a child, a woman who acted so suspiciously that it was easily seen that all was not right with her. I telegraphed for Meggy Dunn to come on, to take charge of the child as soon as we should recover it. And sure enough yesterday we captured our woman and found Master Archie. The woman confessed everything, who had hired her, and the rest of it. We had to let her go. We couldn't press the matter, you see, because Miss Stair's—Lady Trebasil's—marriage had never been proclaimed—"

"But who hired the woman to steal the child?"

"Vernon—your cousin, Charles Vernon!"

"Charles! Why should he steal the child? Vernon?"

"Why, it was in this way. Do you not understand? Vernon thought you dying. He expected at your death to inherit your wealth, but the child was the rightful heir."

Sir Mark passed his hand over his head.

"Pardon me," he said, brokenly. "You say the child is my rightful heir."

"Being your own son! Sir Mark, do you doubt that angel yonder—your wife—the mother of your boy? Your son was born at the Chateau Croisac, near Arpignon, in May of last year. His birth is registered officially as that of Archibald Chichester Trebasil, son of Sir Mark Trebasil and Joliette Trebasil, his wife! Your wife concealed the child's existence, fearing that you would take him from her. She would have battled for him to the death, have denied even that he was your child, would have endured scorn and contumely—"

"I comprehend," said Sir Mark. "I have been blind—mad! Vernon knew that the boy was mine, and tried to get him out of the way. Vernon is the serpent who has wrought all this misery—"

"No; the greater serpent is the hideous jealousy that made you doubt your own true wife!" said Mr. Weston, gravely. "Joliette never loved any man but you; she never wronged you or gave you even the slenderest reason on which to build up your wicked distrust of her. If you had never doubted Joliette and never disowned her, Vernon could have done you no harm."

Joliette began to revive. In obedience to a signal from Mr. Weston the two women went into Joliette's dressing-room, and the lawyer followed them, closing the door behind him.

Husband, wife, and child were alone together.

Sir Mark Trebasil came and knelt by the couch on which his wife lay. The boy beside her looked up with laughing eyes and a wee, bonny face that Sir Mark saw, with a strange pang, was very like his own. Sir Mark's lips quivered, but not yet would he take in his arms the son that his heart acknowledged with a fierce yearning to be indeed his own.

"Joliette," he said, humbly, brokenly, "I have been cruel, wicked. I have sinned beyond all forgiveness. I ask nothing of you, not even to hear you say that you pardon me. I know and acknowledge all your spotless goodness. I know that this boy is my own son. I am going away an outcast and a wanderer. Be happy, Joliette. You will never see me again."

His cheeks were streaming with tears. Joliette looked at him wonderingly, then her face flushed, and an infinite pity shone in her eyes.

"You love me still, Mark?" she whispered.

"Love you! As the outcast Adam and Eve loved their lost paradise. As the fallen angel loved the heaven he had lost for ever!"

He rose to go. Then Joliette, with a radiant look on her lovely face, held up her boy, and he, happy and cooing, put up his arms to his father.

"He is yours, Mark," she said, softly, "and I am yours also. Let us begin anew."

Sir Mark took his wife and child in his arms and sobbed aloud.

We must pass over the interview that followed. Such a reunion is too sacred for description.

Some two hours later, Sir Mark and Lady Tre-

basil emerged from the secret rooms, the baronet proudly bearing his son in his arms.

They found Mr. Weston and the two women in the boudoir.

A scene of rejoicing followed.

"Come downstairs," said Mr. Weston, "and proclaim your marriage, and the existence of your son to the abbey household. It is best to get the acknowledgment done with and the truth known. Take the bull by the horns, Sir Mark."

The baronet was eager to proclaim the truth, and to have his wife and son to himself. The party proceeded downstairs to the drawing-room.

Vernon and Mrs. Malverne were deep in consultation.

Both rose up aghast as the group entered.

"Mrs. Malverne," said Sir Mark, "permit me to make known to you what I am about to state to the assembled household. Miss Stair is Lady Trebasil, my honoured wife, and this fine boy is my own son. Vernon, you are found out and circumvented. Let me advise you to take your betrothed wife and quit the country. You will never succeed to the Trebasil wealth."

Vernon was confounded. He stood dumb and horrified.

And just then a brougham ascended the drive and halted before the porch.

Mrs. Bittle was assembling the two-score servants in the great hall.

Sir Mark had turned from the seemingly petrified Vernon, and was about to address Joliette, when there came a swift rustle, and Charlot Lyle and Adrian Rossiter entered the room.

A scene of the greatest rejoicing followed.

In the midst of the general excitement Vernon made his escape unnoticed.

Sir Mark Trebasil, a little later, his child in his arms, led his beautiful young wife into the great hall, and publicly acknowledged his marriage before her faithful servants.

There was, of course, a great deal of wonder and surprise among the various members of the large household, but Mr. Weston did much to allay both by the neat little speech he made.

The happy news was sent to Waldgrove Castle and to Trebasil village; bonfires were lighted and bells were rung. Before the night fell the glad tidings had spread over the Trebasil estates, and even to Langworth, that Sir Mark Trebasil was the hero of a romance; that he was the husband of the beautiful young mistress of Blair Abbey; that they had been secretly married nearly two years; and that a bright and beautiful son and heir was the fruit of their union.

The story of the separation and reunion formed a nine days' wonder in Cornwall, and was told even in the London newspapers.

After the marriage of Adrian Rossiter and Charlot Lyle Sir Mark Trebasil took his wife and son, with good Mrs. Bittle and Meggy Dunn, abroad, and spent some months in travel. When the gossip and curiosity of their friends and acquaintances had spent their early force they returned to Waldgrove Castle and settled down to a life whose bliss equalled in intensity their former sufferings.

Admiral Bohun lived to see his great-niece again, but died soon after her marriage, bequeathing her his entire fortune.

Vernon's prey had entirely escaped him, even Harold Park recovering his health and enjoying a rare sunshine of prosperity under the kindly patronage of Sir Mark Trebasil.

Defeated, baffled, balked in every plan, Vernon disappeared, and no one who had known him in England ever knew his fate. Gannard emigrated to Australia. Mrs. Malverne, defeated in all her schemes, disappeared also, and her subsequent career, like that of Vernon, is a sealed mystery. It is safe to say, however, judging from their past, that whether together or apart, both Vernon and Mrs. Malverne are following the bent of their own evil natures and will subsequently reap their deserved reward.

THE END.

A NICE POINT OF LAW.—The Roman law-courts are likely to be called upon to decide upon a somewhat peculiar case. Pope Leo XII., finding himself hard pressed for money, induced several families to make him advances, and by way of compensation freed them and their estates from liability to taxation during the present century. The tax-gatherers of the new Italian kingdom, however, refuse to acknowledge the dispensation, and have demanded payment of four years' taxes from the representatives of the families in question. The latter have therefore determined to contest their liability before the legal tribunals.

A MONSTER MACKEREL.—A mackerel is being exhibited at Halifax which was caught off the harbour of that place, and which measures nine feet in

length and weighs over five hundred pounds. After this England can no longer hope to rival the New World in discoveries. For a long time it was a question whether we should not win in the race. We had succeeded in finding the most ancient remnants of humanity; in the matter of flints and spear-heads we were far ahead of our Transatlantic competitors; even our fauna and flora were held to be older than those of the States; we were, in fact, jubilant and full of hope. But our joy is prematurely damped by this tremendous fish, for we must acknowledge that nothing like that has been discovered here. A mackerel nine feet in length and weighing over five hundred pounds is a sight which the eye of English housewives will never witness.

PRIDE.

The raven admiring himself with peacock's feathers, and then looking with contempt on his own kind.

It not unfrequently resembles the highly polished boot that hides the corn it pinches, but for a while.

A rotten rung in life's ladder, which often brings us to the ground.

The sparkling of a mock diamond.

Like an eagle it may soar high, but can never reach heaven.

A weed which often grows the highest in the lowest situations.

A transparent varnish used by the foolish to cover their defects.

A display without, to celebrate the dearth of common sense within.

THE OVERWORKED MAN OF BUSINESS.

SOONER or later the business man finds that his day's work has become an effort, a toil rather than a delight; the last hour has become a strain only maintained by determination; a sense of exhaustion and fatigue envelopes his closure of the day's work, and the last columns of figures have presented difficulties hitherto unknown, and the last pile of letters has seemed more trying than of yore. Anything new, of an unwelcome character, making special demands upon the higher faculties, becomes arduous and distasteful, revealing the fact that the higher powers are fast commencing to give way, to announce their inability; while the more routine matters, which have almost become automatic, or even habitual, can still be effectively discharged.

But in time even these lower processes are affected, and the last half-hour at the office is a distinct trial, and is followed by a new sense of exhaustion. There is a certain amount of irritability combined with the sense of exhaustion, that irritability which is ever found along with the exhaustion of nerve matter; this irritation, sometimes almost amounting to exaltation, marks the commencement of nervous exhaustion and failure. While work seems to become more irksome, the usual sources of pleasure no longer afford their wonted solace and satisfaction. There is a heightened sensibility to any little trivial annoyance, domestic matters are felt more keenly, the dinner is not so satisfactory, the children are noisy; the more necessary for rest, and the more distinct the craving for comfort and quiet, the less seems forthcoming. There is an emotional exaltation which reveals the irritability of the exhausted nerve centres; the newspaper is stupid and uninteresting, the piano wants tuning, servants are detestable, and one wants less obedient and wives less sympathetic than of yore. The mind is as sensitive as is the skin after a blister; the slightest touch produces pain.

ENGLISH SONG-BIRDS FOR EXPORTATION.—The recent experiment of exporting English song-birds to New Zealand has proved favourable, and London bird-catchers are now engaged securing blackbirds, thrushes, linnets, finches, and robins for consignment. The birds already turned out are acclimatized, and are likely to stock the colony. There is a strong desire to have cuckoos, nightingales, swallows, and other birds which migrate to this country during the summer months, but their visit does not extend beyond the period in which the provisions of "The Wild Bird Preservation Act" are in force, and thus their capture is thereby rendered illegal; but efforts will be continued to stock the colony with English birds and game.

A LINK WITH THE PAST.—An interesting relic of a bygone time has lately disappeared from among us with the death, on Tuesday, the 22nd December, of Lord Byron's valet, Falciari, at the age of seventy-eight. After the political extinction of the East India Company in 1858, Falciari went over to Leadenhall Street, and followed the India Office in their pilgrimage westward to Victoria Street, and thence to their present quarters by St. James's Park. He was a very pleasant, obliging person; and, as assistant to the head office-keeper, the polite old Italian,

with his broken English, was often held in friendly chat by those who came across him in the way of business. A paralytic seizure crippled him not long ago, and the late "seasonable weather" carried him off through an attack of bronchitis.

MARLIN MARDUKE.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"But," continued the hermit, "let me tell what more the labours of the old earl discovered; Lady Morina, your wife, Viscount Varil, did not elope with Sir Martin Du Vane. The letters you found were all base forgeries, and the heart of your wife was true to you, her honour spotless."

"The old earl had never believed that one so fair and noble could fall, and his suspicions of treachery once aroused his exertions were boundless."

"Geoffrey Marduke bribed Sir Martin with gold, and forced him with threats to abduct Lady Morina, and to contrive that all should believe she and he had eloped and dishonoured the viscount."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the astonished viscount.

"It is true," said the spy, in a deep and hollow voice. "I swear it is all true. Geoffrey Marduke knew enough of the secret life of Sir Martin Du Vane to send him, if he desired it, to the scaffold, or even gallows; and so was able to wield the cunning and fendishness of Du Vane as he wished. Du Vane persuaded his cousin, Lady Morina, to ride forth with him one evening near the sea. When at a convenient spot, agreed upon by Marduke and Du Vane, a party led by the former rushed upon her, bound her, and placing her in a small boat, speedily conveyed her to a vessel, in which she was carried to Spain. On her arrival in Spain she was forced to enter a convent, which she was not reluctant to do, when she was made to believe that her husband had been slain. But Marduke was suspicious that she intended to escape if she found an opportunity, and therefore took careful measures to guard against it. But she did escape, and probably perished in trying to reach England, for years have passed since she flew from the convent, and Marduke has no doubt that she is dead."

"And who are you?" demanded the viscount.

"I am a miserable man near unto certain death, but I was once Sir Martin Du Vane," replied the spy.

"Dog! you should have received your death-wound from my hand!" exclaimed the viscount, fiercely.

"Curse me, strike me if you wish," said Sir Martin. "I can imagine no punishment you may inflict to be too severe, viscount. Your lady was ever true to you, and ever loved you fondly. She was my cousin, and I swear to you, as I know that I am dying, that she was faithful to you. Farther than the great wrong she was done in being torn from England and her husband, and in having her son stolen from her the year or so before, she received no wrong from me nor Geoffrey Marduke, nor from any one else. My life has for years been in his power, and I have feared him as I never feared any other man, but I do not fear him now, for I am dying. Penmore Kresse is no other than Paul Vuitree, and that maiden they call his daughter Zena is the twin-sister of Mistress Elena and daughter of Lord Alvin and Lady Ida."

Zena and Elena on hearing this throw themselves into each other's arms.

"It can be proved," said Sir Martin, as we may now call him whom we have thus far called Obel Ling. "Paul Vuitree can prove it. Geoffrey Marduke knows it—knows too that Elena and Zena are heiresses of great wealth—and therefore he desired to wed his son, Captain Herod, to Elena, and himself to Zena, for he hopes to have the attainer removed from himself, believing that the viscount and Lord Alvin—he being also heir of the Alvin estate—were dead."

"But the child that was stolen!" exclaimed the viscount. "What became of that child, if my son?"

"This is he," replied the hermit, as he placed his hand upon Martin's shoulder.

"Can this be true?" cried the amazed viscount, springing to his feet.

"It is true," said the spy, firmly, "so help me Heaven."

The viscount did not rush to embrace the commandant. His nature was cold and cautious, until fully convinced.

"I would I had more proof," he said.

"It will be furnished you. The same proof that convinced me, Viscount Varil," remarked the hermit.

"Convinced you!" exclaimed the viscount, "and who are you, sir? I think it is time we were told your name."

"My name in Anglesey is Peter the Bearded," replied the hermit; but, changing his voice from its

tremulous tone to its true and sonorous sound, he added, as he threw off his disfiguring cap so as to display a lofty and intellectual forehead. "At court they call me Lord Varil De Hubert, Earl of Huberton."

"Great Heaven, it is my father!" exclaimed the viscount, as he bent his knee respectfully before the noble earl.

"I am, and the grandfather of this young man hitherto called Marlin Marduke, but some day, I hope, he will be Marlin De Marduke, Earl of Huberton."

"May that day be very distant, my father," said the viscount, as he sprang into the open arms of the earl.

"There is one in my place on the Thames," said the earl, "whom you shall embrace ere long. Know, oh, my son, that your unfortunate wife, Lady Morina, at length reached England, where she fortunately heard the foul scandal that had been cast upon her name before any one recognized her as the long missing Viscountess De Hubert. She further disguised herself and sought for me, but—as I was pursuing my investigation in Europe, seeking in secret and in disguise for proof of what I believed—it was long before she and I met. And then we agreed that she should remain concealed in my palace until it would be made clear that her good name had been most fully belied and until your return to England—for we heard a rumour that a certain duke and a certain prince in the Austrian army were Lord Alvin and Viscount De Hubert, and that they had joined the cause of William of Orange."

"Geoffrey Marduke has believed for more than a year that the Earl of Huberton was at the point of death, for so have I palmed the fable upon his agent in London. The agent, deceived no doubt by some false report, has sent him word that I am dead. He will soon see that I am alive. It was I who have ever protected Marlin from the secret friends of Geoffrey at court—"

"And will you not recognize me, oh, my father?" here exclaimed the strange lady, no longer able to restrain herself, and falling upon her knees before the earl. "Oh, will you not recognize me, that he, Lord Alvin, may recognize his unfortunate wife, Ida of Alvin Moor!"

"Brother Varil, do you not know me? Husband! Richard! do you not know me? Father, father, do you not know your unhappy daughter? Elena, you are my child! and so are you, maiden, they say! Sir Martin Du Vane, do you not recognize Ida de Hubert? Lady Ida of Alvin Moor? I did not perish in Spain, though Hans Von Kane thought me dead—though all of his crew thought me dead. I recovered, I was told when the sails of Von Kane's ship were far out at sea, and he bearing away my misfortune, as I thought."

"Oh, Heaven! can I ever forget the agony of that hour! Heaven took pity upon me, miserable wife and miserable mother that I was, and I became mad, wildly mad, and they put me in prison, where I remained for months, and when my reason came back they let me go whither I would. I went to France under a simple name, for I feared wicked Hugo de Bondville and villainous Hans Von Kane. I sought for Lord Alvin, and heard that he had gone to Austria and been slain in a great battle. All was black to me then, all was as nothing, and I entered a holy order composed of devout widows, and strove to forget the world, and that I had ever been wife and mother."

"So years passed on until I embarked on the 'Belle France,' for England—longing to see the home of my youth forcing me on—and here was I shipwrecked by Heaven's hand that I might in one and the same moment be restored to father, brother, husband and children."

"See!" she added, as she displayed the diamond bracelet and necklace she had concealed in the folds of her robe. "These I have ever preserved. They have escaped the rapacious Von Kane, for in Spain they were concealed in my clothing, and yonder at the inn dear Elena preserved them for me. Ah, Richard, my husband, do you not remember the diamond necklace you gave me on our wedding-day?"

So saying, she placed the necklace of diamonds in the hands of Lord Alvin, and continued, as she presented the bracelets to the earl:

"And you, my father, do you not remember these, which you gave me on my sixteenth birthday, the day when I became Lord Alvin's bride? They were selected by you, Brother Varil, and presented by you, my father."

Lord Alvin had been listening like one thunder-struck while she rapidly and almost incoherently uttered these words so full of amazing surprise. His eyes fell upon the necklace as she placed it in his hands, and his face grew pale and his frame trembled.

"Great Heaven! She lives! My wife! My Ida!"

he said, and clasped the lady to his bosom in an ecstasy of joy.

"It is my dear daughter, thank Heaven!" exclaimed the earl, delighted.

"Ay, and my own dear sister, Ida!" said Viscount Varil, in his turn embracing Lady Alvin.

"And these are my daughters!" said she, as she freed herself from the clinging embrace of father, husband, and brother, and drew Zona and Elena to her heart. "These beautiful girls are the babes who were torn from me nineteen years ago! Oh! bountiful Heaven, I thank thee!"

Viscount Varil now turned to Maria—no longer to be called Maria Marduke, but Maria de Hubert, son of a viscount and grandson of an earl, and by nature so noble that no patent of royalty could more ennoble him—the viscount turned to him and said:

"I am proud of you, my son, for though I know but little of you that little is enough to convince me that you are a son of whom any peer in England or prince in Europe might be proud."

With these words the Viscount Varil warmly embraced his son.

"It is only within a few months," said the earl, "that I became fully convinced that Maria was my grandson, though the family features are so strongly marked in his face."

"But when considered I resolved to aid him in effecting the destruction of the smuggler and his entire confederation. While thus engaged I assumed this disguise, better to effect my purpose, and, readily making the acquaintance of Elena, I formed an alliance with her to aid my unfortunate grandson to escape from Rheinland's grasp."

"Her great resemblance to Lady Ida struck me forcibly, and, suspicion being on the alert, I soon became convinced that I had at last found one of my grand-daughters. Still, I felt that important secret in my own bosom, nor have I ever hinted to Maria that he was more than the son of Geoffrey Marduke, but the son of a noble gentleman."

Here the spy, Sir Martin Du Vane, said:

"My lord, I can substantiate all that you say, and may I live to prove more."

He glanced towards Zona, and her eyes met his. She understood his meaning, and her face, flushed as it had been for several minutes with joy and pride, grew doubly pale, while her features seemed changed to stone.

Her emotion, however, was unperceived by any except the unhappy Sir Martin, for at that moment the baying of the hound without told them that friends or enemies were approaching.

The earl threw off his heavy disguise of sheepskins, revealing beneath a rich dress and the cuirass worn by great leaders at that epoch, and put upon his head a plumed steel cap, saying:

"My beard is my own, and I may not put it off now, but henceforth I am Varil, Earl of Huberton."

So saying he belted upon his thigh a golden-sheathed sword, emblematic of his lofty rank, and drew his tall person erect.

Threescore and ten years had made white the aged nobleman's beard, yet as he turned to leave the room both Varil and Engelbert thought they had seldom seen a more warlike or vigorous shape.

The baying of the dog was fast and furious, but before explaining its cause we must ask the attention of the reader to events which had been transpiring in the house of Hans Von Kane, or, as he was called in Anglesey, Kaspar Rheinhard.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Geoffrey Marduke, upon leaving the room in which he supposed the commandant was securely a prisoner, hurried to the front of the inn, where he found the man Arrows bound and gagged, and surrounded by an inquisitive crowd, who sought to learn from those who guarded him why he was thus treated.

To these questions the four men who held him in custody declined to reply, and as a mob cannot brook refusal to satisfy its curiosity, it was yelling and pressing closely upon the captive as Geoffrey appeared.

"Silence!" he cried. "This man has been taken in the act of sleeping on guard, and the man over whom he was placed to keep guard was your most bitter foe, Maria, the commandant. The penalty?"

The mob, fierce and reckless, and thirsty for blood, replied, as one man:

"The penalty is instant punishment!"

"And the punishment?" demanded Geoffrey.

"The punishment is instant death!" roared the mob.

"And the sentence?" said Geoffrey.

"Must be pronounced by Sir Geoffrey Marduke."

"Let him be!" cried Geoffrey, whose mood was at the moment most furious.

While preparations were being made to put this

sentence in execution a clamour arose among the friends of the condemned man.

"It is too hard!"

"He has been a true and faithful man!"

"He fought well against the coastguard."

These and many other cries were rapidly flung about, and to them were added the shrill screams of the wife of the condemned man for mercy for her husband.

It was the arrest of this man that alone saved Maria from being detected in that escape from his prison which has been described, for it was the intention of Geoffrey to have him removed to the dungeon of the inn immediately.

But while the ferocious and enraged Geoffrey sought to gratify his spite upon Arrows, Maria was escaping.

Again, had not the friends of the arrested man made a clamorous outcry against the sentence, it would have been executed immediately, and then Geoffrey would have returned to his captive in time to cut off his escape.

The smuggler chief became more enraged as opposition arose, an opposition which increased rapidly as the condemned man contrived to free his mouth from the gag, and asked his fearfully eloquent appeals for mercy to those of his wife and friends.

The people of Anglesey, such as were not inaccessible or worn out from debt and excitement, thronged around the four guards, and an effort was made to rescue the prisoner.

To Geoffrey's great wrath and amazement Paul Vulture had this effect, and stimulated the mob to resist the commandant. Had Geoffrey known that Arrows owed Vulture a sum of money he would have understood why he was so eager that Arrows should live.

"Arrows alive," thought the scoundrel and grasping Vulture, "will probably pay me back what he has borrowed. But Arrows dead is a dead loss to me."

Therefore Paul Vulture, taking ready advantage of the mood of the mob, shouted at the top of his lungs:

"Rescue him! Rescue him!"

But Geoffrey, who had always distrusted this wily agent of many of his crimes, believed that as he had now lost control of Zona he was meditating the overthrow of his authority among the people of Anglesey, over whom he had ruled for so many years.

The hopes of the smuggler chief had nearly reached success, as he believed, for William of Orange was in England.

William was indebted to him for many important services. William would undoubtedly be king, and have the attainder removed from the rights and name of Hugo de Boudville; the Earl of Huberton was dead, he believed; the heirs of the earldom were in his power, for he suspected that the two travellers had taken refuge in the hermit's hut, or if not there they could be readily overtaken or found after day-dawn, and day-dawn was not far off; Zona, whom he madly loved, would soon be his wife—Zona, the elder-born of the twin daughters of the house of Alvin, and therefore heiress of its great wealth, and he would be heir of its title and landed estates; Elena, the joint heiress with Zona, would soon be the wife of his son; his vengeance upon the houses of Alvin and De Hubert would soon be consummated, and he be a peer of England.

All these dreams seemed within his grasp, and yet this fellow Paul Vulture, once called Penmare Krees, could, if he dared, reveal to the world how Geoffrey Marduke won it all.

That he would dare to do so was proved by this moiling of the mob—though, in truth, Paul Vulture was not aware of the presence of the smuggler chief, as he, Vulture, had come after the tumult began.

"It is time that the villain died," muttered Geoffrey, levelling his pistol at Vulture, and discharging it.

A chance movement of Vulture's head saved his life for the moment, otherwise the ball would have pierced his brain. As it was the leaden messenger struck him slant upon the head, fracturing his skull and hurling him to the earth senseless and half dead.

The mob, startled by the unexpected fall of one of their leaders, raised a furious yell, and a charge was made upon the four men around Arrows, during which the prisoner was rescued, and for a time it seemed as if Geoffrey's person was in danger, so infuriated were the rioters with rage and strong drink, and the fierce excitement of that tremendous carousal, which had now lasted from sunset almost to dawn.

But the well-disciplined crews of Geoffrey and Captain Herod soon subdued the rioters and restored order.

Arrows, however, had escaped, and, by the advice of his friends, taken to his heels and immediate concealment.

A sullen silence fell upon the rioters, as Geoffrey and Captain Herod encircled the inn with their veteran crews, which was broken by the shrill voice of Paul Vulture, whose senses had returned to him, and who felt that he had received a mortal wound.

"Let me speak to Geoffrey Marduke," he screamed, and under the belief that the wound he had received was from the hand of Captain Herod. "Lead Geoffrey Marduke to me."

The smuggler chief advanced and stood near the wounded man, who lay extended upon the earth while some one rudely bandaged his head.

"Sir Geoffrey," said Vulture, not knowing he was addressing the man who had given him his death-wound, but burning for vengeance upon Captain Herod, his supposed slayer; "Sir Geoffrey, if you wed Zona, you will wed the wife of another man."

"You rave, Vulture! Your wound has destroyed your mind," replied Geoffrey.

"I swear that what I say is the truth," said Vulture. "Obel Ling—you and I know who he is—acted as priest. He may be a priest, for all I know. I think he is, and prove too. No matter whether he is or not—he acted as priest, and in my presence wedded Zona to Captain Herod."

"To my son!" exclaimed Geoffrey.

"To your son—to Captain Herod Marduke. I swear it."

"And when was this deed done, and why?" demanded Geoffrey, black with rage.

"Some four months ago, and because Captain Herod paid me one thousand golden crowns," answered Vulture. "But we did not know then that Geoffrey Marduke loved the girl—Geoffrey Marduke, who is at least thirty-five years her senior. I am dying—dying—but I can sting you yet!"

Geoffrey Marduke, agitated at hearing this, raised his eyes and saw Captain Herod standing near, pale and resolute, his arms folded across his broad breast.

"Has this hound spoken the truth?" demanded Geoffrey, in a hoarse, harsh voice.

"Obel Ling, disguised as a priest," replied Captain Herod, "married me to Zona Vulture, but, of course, the marriage was a sham; nor did I suspect that you cared aught for her."

"The marriage was not a sham," thundered Geoffrey, in high wrath, "if Obel Ling celebrated it, either as priest or parson, for he holds his authority from both Jacobites and Orangemen. Idiot! You have thwarted my hopes, but I will thwart yours. Elena Rheinland shall be my wife, and Zona Vulture be delivered to the vengeance of our laws."

"A courier! A courier from London!" cried several voices, and at the same moment a horseman dashed up to the group, exclaiming:

"Where is Sir Geoffrey Marduke? I have a letter for him, marked 'With haste! For life and death!'"

"I am Geoffrey Marduke," said the smuggler chief, taking the letter.

He broke the seal hastily, and read thus:

"LONDON, Dec., 1638.

"The earl is not dead. I have been deceived. For many a year the earl has been disguised and living at or near Anglesey, under the name of Peter the Bearded, the hermit of the beach."

Geoffrey Marduke glanced towards the direction in which the abode of the hermit was situated. The summit of the cliff that was not far from it seemed all aglow, and the clouds above it were red with reflected flame. The dull boom of a distant cannon, the same heard by Fry, fell upon his ear.

"My destruction is intended," thought the smuggler chief. "The wily old earl has outwitted me. But I have his grandson and his grand-daughters in my power, and their lives shall pay for all."

Wild with fury, he commanded several of his men to follow him, and hurried to the door of the room in which he had last seen the young commandant.

To his amazement he found his entrance barred, but no response made to his call by Dikeman. Axes and sledges were brought and hurriedly used against the door. It was shattered into fragments and splinters in a few minutes, but the heap of furniture was still in the way.

This being broken and dashed aside, Geoffrey Marduke found his captive gone, and his guard also. The hole in the wall showed how they escaped, but Geoffrey knew that the passage led to the pit beneath the ante-room of the dungeon.

"Idiot!" he muttered. "They cannot escape me. Where is Master Rheinland? Where is the landlord?"

No one knew, and, cursing him for being absent when his presence was so much needed, Geoffrey ordered his followers to attend him, and led the way to the ante-room of the dungeon, where he knew Rheinland had placed Zona and Elena.

Fury and consternation filled his brain when he found the room open and empty, with only the



[THE ABDUCTION OF LADY MORINA.]

bound and gagged landlord stretched helplessly upon the floor.

With desperate haste the smuggler chief freed the landlord's jaws from the gag, and exclaimed:

"How is this? Where are the girls?"

"Gone! Escaped! An hour ago!" gasped Rheinhand.

"How? They must have had help? Speak!"

Rolling his great eyes in horrible agony, the poisoned landlord replied.

With Marlin Marduke and Dikeman. They came up through the trap. I came in and they struck me down. Help! I am poisoned! I am dying! Get me an antidote! Is there any? A thousand pounds for the antidote! Move me away from the pit! Red-hot and blistering hands are clawing and dragging me toward the pit! Untie me! Curse you, Hugo de Bondville! you, too, desert me!"

Geoffrey had not paused to aid or unbind the miserable man, but had hurried away, shouting:

"Follow me, all!"

"Curse you!" roared Rheinhand, though his swollen tongue, envenomed and lacerated, protruded from his blackening lips. "You leave me to be dragged into the pit! into the pit that is full of horrors! Mercy! help! ten thousand pounds for help! They grasp me, they pull, they are dragging me towards the pit! All the murdered travellers have their very hands upon me! Will no one help me? Marlin Marduke! I can make you heir to an earldom! Lady Ida! Zona! Elena! help!"

Thus screamed and shrieked and raved the assassin as he floundered and struggled, believing that red-hot and bony hands were reached out from the pit and dragging him into it. His plunges and contortions slowly but surely carried him nearer and nearer to the edge, and at length he rolled into the dreadful opening headlong and vanished for ever from the sight of men, his last howl of agony filling the room with a horrible screech of agony, terror and despair.

Meanwhile Geoffrey Marduke had hastened to the portico of the inn and announced to the people of Anglesey that their most hated enemy had again escaped and was then, no doubt, hiding in the hermit's hut, who was a spy and an enemy.

"Burn the old bearded wizard in his den!" roared the mob, and soon after a great crowd, led by Geoffrey and Captain Herod and their crows, was plunging along the beach towards the hermit's abode.

So much noise and hooting did they make that they heard not the quick tramp of cavalry sweeping into Anglesey in their rear.

Day was dawning rapidly, but the force which had landed and been led to the hermit's abode was hidden

from Geoffrey and his mad followers, for the earl had ordered these men to be drawn up in compact array behind the overturned ship.

"The cavalry!" suddenly cried one of the smugglers in the rear, as a strong body of horse was seen to sweep down upon the beach and come charging towards them.

It was the troop which had all night been blundering about the country misled by Geoffrey's guide.

The commander of the troop had at length discovered his mistake, and was now burning with a desire for vengeance.

"Face them, and give them a volley," commanded Geoffrey, who, with his forces, was then within thirty yards of the wrecked ship.

A wild cheer burst from the smugglers as they halted and faced the approaching horses, and levelled their fire-arms; but at the next moment a cry of terror arose from them as scores upon scores of well-armed men rushed towards them from both ends of the wrecked ship, firing into them rapidly and with fatal aim.

In the midst of the confusion the troop of cavalry charged with a dash and a cheer, and in a very brief space of time the people of Anglesey, hundreds of whom had swarmed after the smugglers, and the smugglers themselves were flying in utter rout in every direction.

They fled all the more hastily as they recognized the well-known charging shout and battle-cry of their hated enemy, Marlin Marduke. Only the veteran crews of Geoffrey and Captain Herod rallied around their leaders and endeavoured to retreat from the beach to the shore.

But escape was soon seen to be impossible, for the forces which had landed at the cliff were well-trained soldiers and sailors, selected by the Earl of Huberton for this very service, and the cavalymen, though few in number, were picked men and used to battle.

The show of force was too great to be resisted by the smugglers with any show of success, yet Geoffrey and Captain Herod refused to throw down their arms.

Their followers, however, had no desire to be slain merely to gratify their leaders, and first one and then another, and then all, threw down their arms and sat down upon the sand.

"Curse upon you all for cowardly dogs!" cried Geoffrey, discharging his last shot at the earl, but missing him.

In another moment he and Captain Herod, sword in hand, rushed upon their foes. They were overpowered and beaten down in an instant, both mortally wounded.

By the command of the earl they were carried into the room in which Sir Marlin lay dying, and there Geoffrey Marduke cursed his fate bitterly as he recognized Zona, Elena, and Lady Alvin.

Zona would have knelt by the side of her evil husband, Captain Herod, but he repulsed her with a fierce imprecation, saying:

"Away! Let me die in peace."

She turned away, cold and haughty, too proud to shed a tear for so base a man, and Elena drew that beautiful and rigid face tightly to her bosom, saying:

"Think not of him. He is unworthy of a thought."

"It is because I once loved so vile a thing that my heart is breaking," replied Zona.

As death crept nearer and nearer to the life of Hugo de Bondville he became appalled, his ferocious courage fled, and he made a full confession of all his crimes, thus establishing the facts narrated by the earl.

He and his evil son died ere the sun set again, and were buried in the sands of the beach.

Paul Vultres added his confession to that made by his late associate, and died raving mad, under the belief that all his beloved gold had been stolen.

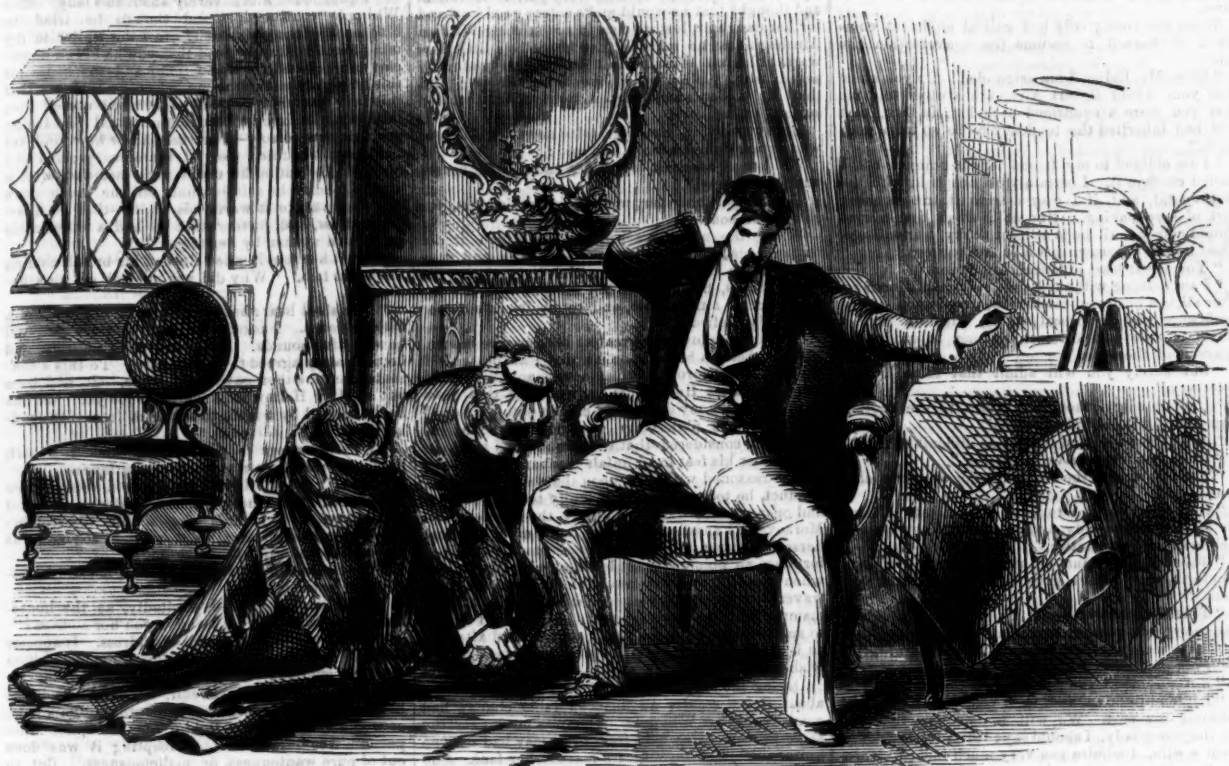
The earl and his relatives then left Anglesey and hastened to London, where Viscount Varil was folded by the arms of his faithful and long-lost wife, the still beautiful Lady Morina: and then gallant Marlin, the commandant, received a fond and proud mother's first welcoming embrace from Lady Morina also.

Marlin was soon after united to his lovely and loving Elena, and in their happy home Zona dwelt until time had healed her heart and education made her an accomplished lady, when she became the bride of a noble gentleman, who loved her too devotedly to love her less when he had heard her history.

In peace and happiness the lives of the earl and his kindred were passed, and in time Marlin became Earl of Huberton.

Fry, the courier, lived and died in the service of Earl Marlin, as did honest and rough Dikeman, both often relating endless tales of Anglesey to the children of Elena and Zona, and dwelling especially upon the fact that Sir Marlin du Vane survived his evil associates several hours, and was buried in good hard earth, and that the "Stuart Arms" was soon after struck by lightning, and burned to the ground, the flames extending and actually reducing to ashes nearly the whole of that horrible place, called in this story Anglesey.

THE END.



[THE CONFESSION.]

HARD AS OAK.

BY
J. E. MUDDOCK.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?
Was ever woman in this humour won?

Shakespeare.

Six months have passed since Robert Ainsleigh made Rubini a bankrupt. Many changes have taken place. Mrs. Holmwood has mourned her daughter as one mourns for a child whom death has snatched away. Robert himself scarcely seemed less severely smitten by the hand of sorrow. The sudden and mysterious disappearance of her upon whom he had set his hopes had a marked effect upon him. He bore his disappointment in silence, though he resorted to many means to try and discover the whereabouts of the fugitive.

Rubini and his wife since the bankruptcy had not been heard of. They had dropped from the public view.

A new character had appeared upon the scene in the person of William Ainsleigh, who had returned from India with an affection of the liver and a string of liabilities that to discharge would make a considerable hole in his first year's income from his share of his father's property.

There was a very conspicuous difference in the two brothers. William was a tall, raw-boned, listless young fellow, who parted his hair in the centre, was very near-sighted, and spoke with a drawling accent. He suffered from a chronic state of indolence, partly constitutional and partly acquired by long residence in the Bengal hill station. To have aroused him into anything like real activity would have required something little short of the sudden outbreak of a volcano beneath his very nose. He was a frequent visitor at the house of Mr. Hetheridge, and was an especial favourite with Ethel, who only had to request him to perform her slightest wish and he obeyed with all the docility of a well-trained poodle.

He attended her during her afternoon rides, he accompanied her to balls, though she was fain to confess that he was an awfully lazy dancer. Their tastes in nearly all respects assimilated. He did not like the country. It was "so awfully quiet, you know," as he himself expressed it. And there was no use "a fellow living if he couldn't be jolly."—though Mr. William Ainsleigh's idea of jollity might have been defined as an occasional visit to the opera, a leisurely stroll through a flower-show, an after-

noon drive in a luxurious brougham, and dancing attendances upon the capricious and flighty Miss Hetheridge; while to lazily sip brandy-pawnee and smoke Manilla cheroots appeared to him to be the summum bonum of earthly happiness.

It was seldom the brothers were together, for the dissimilarity in their tastes seemed to keep them apart. But when they did meet William's chief topic of conversation was Miss Hetheridge, whose manifold virtues he summed up in the pithy and laconic sentence:

"She's an awfully nice girl, by Jove!"

He had also on various occasions ventured to remark to Robert:

"Look here, old fellow, I shall marry Ethel myself if you don't."

To which his brother would reply that he was at liberty to do so, and he thought that he and Ethel would make a good match.

But however sincere William might be in his wooing, he was by no means an active wooer, and though when he rose morning after morning and prepared himself to encounter another fatiguing day he mentally resolved to speak to Ethel on the subject, he somehow, long before the day had faded, forgot all about his resolution, or his courage failed him. At any rate the momentous question was never asked, and during this apathy and delay a rival was making headway against him, this rival being a no less important person than Mr. Charles Eldon, the materialist and stolid.

He had settled comfortably down on his property in Surrey, where he occupied himself between attending to a limited practice as a surgeon, collecting geological specimens, indulging in his favourite weakness, smoking, and visiting at the house of Mr. Hetheridge, with whom he was an especial favourite.

The latter gentleman, since the match between Robert and his daughter had been broken off and the death of his old friend Ainsleigh, troubled himself very little about his daughter, leaving her entirely to the care of her mother.

Mrs. Hetheridge was a woman with a good deal of natural shrewdness, and she was not slow to perceive that if Ethel had lost one lover she had at least gained two. Not that Eldon ever made any open declaration of his feelings, nor would his conduct have caused any but a very close observer to infer that he thought more of the lady than any one might have done of his friend's daughter. But it did not escape the keen vision of the mother that this gentleman's close attention to and evident fondness to be alone with her daughter pointed to something more than friendship. For her own part she would have

preferred him for a son-in-law to William Ainsleigh, the worldly position of both young men being about on a par with each other.

If William Ainsleigh was annoyed at what he considered rivalry on the part of Eldon, Eldon did not hesitate to show that he thought Ainsleigh an intruder, and, although a very old friend of the family, he bore no affection and very little respect for him, and in his own mind considered he was a brainless coxcomb.

As for Ethel, it was difficult to tell what she thought of her admirers. One time she seemed to favour one and another the other. She certainly took pleasure in teasing them, and often when William called he would find that Ethel was out with Eldon and vice versa.

With Ainsleigh his annoyance found vent in expressions by no means complimentary to his rival. He designated him a bore and a confounded nuisance. But Eldon, on the other hand, suffered his disappointments with that equanimity so characteristic of him, and soothed his ruffled feelings, if they were ruffled, by an extra pipe or two.

One afternoon Eldon had forestalled his rival and accompanied Miss Hetheridge on an excursion up the river, and in doing so he determined to make the occasion serviceable, to ascertain, if possible, her feelings towards him.

"I should think you find your retreat very dull, Mr. Eldon," she observed, thereby giving him the opportunity he sought.

"Yes, rather; just a little dull. I am not used to managing a house, and my servants are troublesome."

"But surely you have very little difficulty in finding a good manager."

"I find it extremely difficult."

"Then you must be very hard to please."

"I confess that I am. Such a manager as I require is not to be procured any day."

"Indeed. I should have thought that housekeepers abounded."

"They do; but the housekeeper I want is a wife."

"A wife. Can that be possible?"

And Miss Hetheridge was seized with an uncontrollable fit of laughter, that lasted a considerable time.

Eldon showed no symptoms of either annoyance or impatience. He merely puffed vigorously at his cigar, and examined with some attention a curious stone he had picked up at one of the places they had landed from their boat when he had grown tired of pulling.

The oars were at rest now, and the boat was

drifting idly amongst the sedges under some willows.

When the young lady had gained sufficient command of herself to resume the conversation she said:

"Why, Mr. Eldon, I am astounded! Do you know that your friend Robert Ainsleigh always told me that you were a confirmed bachelor; in fact, that you had inherited the tendency to be so from your birth."

"I am obliged to my friend for his opinion, but I cannot confirm it. I certainly do not hold with the sentimental, and, if I may so term it, the mooning part of love-making. Nor do I think that a man should marry until he is at least thirty years of age, when he has outgrown his bibe and tuckers."

"You are at least practical, Mr. Eldon."

"I am nothing without I am practical. Marriage, after all, is a business transaction, based upon mutual confidence and reciprocal tastes, with an earnest desire on the part of each partner to study the interests of the other."

"But surely you will admit that some love is necessary."

"Undoubtedly; though I prefer to use another term and call it natural affection."

"And is the wife you require so difficult to find?"

"No. I believe I have found her."

"Then I presume the consummation of your wishes is at hand."

"I am not prepared to answer that yet. I have not spoken to the lady, and have no idea what her feelings are in the matter."

"But surely she must be aware of your predilection for her, and have given you some encouragement?"

"That I cannot answer. I don't know that she has shown any positive aversion to my suit."

"That then may be taken as a hopeful sign."

"I am pleased to think so."

"But why don't you put it to the test?"

"I intend to do so, and, with your permission, will rehearse my part. We will assume now that you are the young lady. I should say: 'Miss Hetheridge, I want a wife. I admire you very much indeed. More, I believe that you can make me very happy and comfortable. My connections are excellent. My income at present is over two thousand a-year, with prospects of a rapid increase, owing to improvements I am effecting in my property. I am a man of by no means extravagant tastes. As long as my wife kept my interests in view I should not interfere with her in any way. I should allow her all that she wanted in reason. In short, she would be her own mistress, and the one binding stipulation I should make would be that she should not attempt to put my pipe out.'"

Ethel laughed heartily as he finished and dipped the oars carelessly in the water, but without propelling the boat along.

"I should say that the lady who failed to be tempted by such attractions must be very hard to please," she said, as she tried to hook with her parasol a large cork that floated by.

"Just my opinion," he answered. "Therefore, having finished my speech, and after a reasonable pause I should take the lady's hand, as I now take yours, and say: 'My dear madam, may I hope that the considerations I have ventured to advance will find favour with you, and that I shall have the pleasure and honour of making you Mrs. Eldon?'"

"You don't expect me to answer you?" she asked, enjoying the joke immensely, and laughing loudly.

"Indeed I do."

"Well, then I should simply say 'Ask papa.'"

"And that gentleman's consent having been obtained, there would be no farther obstacles?"

"No."

"Good. Then, passing from the playful to the serious, permit me to say that you are the lady whom I wish for a wife."

"I!"

"Even you, Miss Hetheridge."

"But really, Mr. Eldon," she said, shyly, as the colour rushed into her face and she hung her head, "this is a strange way of wooing."

"Possibly. But its very novelty should recommend it. At least it saves a good deal of beating about the bush. But to come to the point, may I hope that my suit will find favour with you?"

"I must refer you to my papa."

What more could she say? It was quite enough for practical Eldon, and so he pulled the boat out from the sedges, and paddled up the stream.

Eldon was by no means an impetuous young man, and so did not hurry himself to ask Mr. Hetheridge's consent to the union; but Ethel, in the meantime, did not fail to acquaint her mamma, and the cat, having once escaped from the bag, kept up a pretty good run, and of course the news travelled in consequence.

Mrs. Hetheridge, who was very partial to Eldon, and thought that he would make a very good husband for her daughter, lost no time in acquainting William Ainsleigh that he must for the future be a little less warm in his attentions. And William very naturally asked why. Whereupon the lady informed him that Mr. Eldon stood in the light of an accepted suitor.

This was by no means grateful news to William, who actually fired a little, and said:

"Eldon is a sneak, by Jove, and I will horse-whip the fellow!"

That threat, however, was never carried out, for obvious reasons.

When the news reached Robert, which it did through his mother, he laughed heartily, and subjected Eldon to a most unmerciful badgering. All these things, however, Eldon suffered with the indifference of a true stoic, and to his friend's banter he merely replied:

"My dear fellow, the greatest hero may be beaten. William being a hero, I confess that I am beaten. I thought myself proof against a woman's eyes. But time and Miss Hetheridge have proved that I am wrong. I own my defeat and can do nothing more."

But Eldon's philosophy was not shared by his rival, who considered that the ground had been cut from under his feet in an unfair manner. And though Robert reasoned with him upon the absurdity of his conduct, he took every opportunity to insult Eldon, and open rupture was very nearly the consequence. Moreover he assailed the very noble mind of Ethel herself, a young lady who really seemed incapable of forming an opinion, or, at least, of adhering to one when formed, and the result of this was that she wavered very much in her decision, and told her mamma that she was very sorry she allowed Eldon to speak to her as he did; so that it seemed after all as if Eldon's delay were likely to prove fatal to his wishes.

During the six months that had served to bring about these results an unaccountable change had come over Miss Whimple. She was no longer the same woman. Her hair from iron-gray had become quite white, and lines of care marked her face. She kept herself secluded, and appeared to suffer acutely. It was seldom that Robert saw her. She seemed to avoid him, and he very naturally attributed her behaviour to sorrow for the irreparable loss of her master.

But he was soon to be undeceived in this respect.

One evening she sent a message that she would like to have an interview with him if he would grant it, and he lost no time in inviting her to the library, but she said she should prefer her own room, and he went there accordingly.

"I have begged for this interview," she said, when he had seated himself, "that I may unburden my conscience of a weight that is too heavy for it, and ask your forgiveness."

Then she told him of that fatal night in the library, when his unfortunate father had thrown up his arms and then fallen dead on his face. She concealed nothing from him, nor tried in any degree to palliate her fault. She cast herself at his feet and supplicated in heart-broken tones for his pardon.

"You have it," was his answer; "but you have done me an injury, and a lady who is pure and good a cruel wrong by your unjust suspicions."

He, in return, informed her of Miss Holmwood's history, of his first and last meeting with her, and of her sudden and mysterious disappearance, and of his determination never to marry unless Miss Holmwood became his wife.

"I am astounded," the housekeeper answered, when he had finished, "and it is my duty now to tell you something that I have kept back for reasons that you will readily understand. About four months ago, that is about two months after your father's death, the man Rubini called here one day when you were from home."

"Called here?"

"Yes; he wanted to see your father, not knowing, of course, of his decease. I asked him what his business was, as in your absence I was responsible manager. He then informed me that you had ruined him, that you had been intriguing with an apprentice of his, as he termed her, a low-bred, ungrateful, deceitful creature. He accused you of having been guilty of leading her astray, and through you she had run away with some other man."

"As foul a falsehood as ever was uttered!"

"I believe that; I thought so then. The man's object in calling was evidently to estrange you from your father, and from a few hints he let drop he thought it probable he might extort money on the ground that he should refrain from spreading the scandal, as he termed it."

"The scandal!" Robert muttered, between his teeth.

"I questioned him severely about this lady," Miss Whimple continued, "and though he tried to blacken her in my sight she grew the whiter in my mind for it. I had noticed that you had been down-cast and dejected for some time, and the cause for this was plain enough to me when he told me that this lady had disappeared. I accused myself then for having indirectly been instrumental in causing you this new sorrow—I scarcely know how, and yet the thought haunted me. I therefore pressed him for any information he could give me, and after a deal of fencing he said he could tell me much more if I would make it worth his while—that he knew her address, and, further, that he had a letter in his possession written by her to you."

"Great heavens!" cried Robert, his breath coming thick and fast. "Why did you not tell me this before?"

"You shall hear; but let me beg of you to have a little patience. I asked him what his price was, and he said fifty pounds. I immediately refused this, and he ultimately agreed to take twenty. To this I consented, and he then gave me a letter. It had been left at Miss Holmwood's lodgings for you, and he had managed by a bribe to obtain it from her land-lady."

"Where—where is this letter?" asked Robert, hurriedly, unable to restrain his impatience.

"Here," replied Miss Whimple, as she opened her pocket and took therefrom an envelope, crumpled and dirty, and handing the single description: "Robert Ainsleigh, Esq., but written so badly as scarcely to be readable."

The envelope had not been opened, nor did he attempt to open it then.

"Well, well," he said, excitedly, as the housekeeper passed, "and did he give you her address?"

"Yes; at least he gave me an address. It appears that a few days before he called, he had written to his wife who had been in this library's company for the return of a ring, a souvenir, which she had lent her, and upon which she had set great store. This lady, or woman, had shown Rubini the letter, for what purpose it is hard to divine, excepting it was done out of pure wantonness, or maliciousness. But to the point: The address she gave for the ring to be sent to was '60, Pineapple Street, Brooklyn, New York.'"

Poor Robert! As the information was conveyed his head swam and his heart seemed to stand still. New York!

Between him and it rolled the Atlantic. Between the then and now a gap of time interposed sufficiently long to shut out hope of her still being there, for he thought it more than possible that that address was simply a temporary one. Moreover, she had told him on one occasion that her papa was in America. Still it did not solve the mystery. Whom had she gone with? Why had she gone? And why had she never written to her heart-broken mother?

These thoughts flashed through his brain with bewildering rapidity, and he exclaimed, almost fiercely:

"Miss Whimple, how have you dared to keep this information from me so long?"

"Oh! forgive me! I think I must have been mad. I really think that since that fatal night when you told me of your meeting with this young lady I have been affected with acute mania. But I kept this news and letter from you because I feared that you would go to America. I thought the girl was unworthy, and that you were simply infatuated. I could not bear to think of your throwing yourself away—could not bear the idea of your leaving. The house was so lonely, so desolate, without your dear father, and if you had gone the place would have become unbearable to me. I have been guilty, but I have suffered remorse, oh! so terrible, and if it is your desire I will go away and never return."

"No, that is not my desire," Robert said, touched with the woman's earnestness. "And I can forgive the wrong, great as it is, that you have done me; for I believe that however much you have erred it has been error of the head, not heart."

"It is so, indeed. And many and many weary, bitter hours have I passed, until the secret became unbearable. That terrible scene of your father's death nearly upset my reason. I have wept day and night since."

"The sorrow that came sudden as a thunderbolt upon our house was possibly due to you in some measure. But I do not presume to judge you. Twenty years of unalloyed happiness could not eradicate the memory of the sorrow I have known during the past few months. Deep sorrows, though they may not be lasting, leave an injury behind that nothing can repair. Your own conscience is the best scourge. I can well afford to set your many years of motherly care against this one great but not altogether unpardonable sin. You have my forgiveness and pity."

She could only falter as he left the room, for her soba well nigh choked her.

"Noble, generous boy, Heaven watch over you!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

Thanks to man,
Of noble minds, is honourable need.
Shakespeare.

WHEN Robert reached his own room he hastily tore open the envelope which Miss Whimple had given him, and unfolded the sheet of paper it contained.

It was bleared and stained with tears, and the letters were so badly formed, owing to the fact that the writer had written with her left hand, that it was only after great difficulty he deciphered the following:

"ROBERT, MY BELOVED,

"When you read this I shall be far away, flying from you. Not for the want of love, but because my love for you is so strong that I dare not bring disgrace and dishonour on your noble head. Oh, Robert, if you knew how my heart is breaking, with a sorrow that has no name you would pity me. A few months ago I was a happy, careless girl, and now to-night, as I sit here, with my hot tears blinding me, and trying to scrawl with my uninjured arm something approaching to writing, I feel as if long years of terrible suffering were weighing upon me, as if I were a woman, crushed and broken and hopeless, and I feverishly wished that I were dead. The love I bear you is unutterable. And yet I am against myself pitiless—hard as oak, which stands the shocks of a thousand gales, and only bows its head when riven by the awful lightning. So do I tear myself from you, loving you, Heaven knows, so dearly. When men shall speak evil of me, when the voice of slander seeks to sully my honour, that jewel beyond price to a woman, believe them not.

"Do not seek to trace me. It is better for us both that you should not. Time, the great assuager of grief, will soon heal your wound and bring you forgetfulness, for a man is not so impressionable as a woman. But where shall I seek for Eathor? In the grave? Heaven guide me!

"Farewell! Night and morning, though I dare not pray for myself, I will pray for you. You are my first and you shall be my last love, for my heart is yours and yours only; none other can possess it.

"MARY."

How can you describe the emotion of the man as he read this missive? Every word bore the impress of truth. Every word spoke of the awful anguish from which she suffered.

He wept.

There was no shame in a man weeping from such a cause; and, as he bowed his head on his hands, and the hot tears trickled through his fingers, he felt inclined to murmur and say: "The burden of the cross laid upon me is too heavy to bear."

The letter made the mystery still more mysterious. It explained nothing, and, so far from doing what she imagined, causing him to give up pursuit of her, it had quite the opposite effect. It made his love the stronger, if that were possible; made him see how inestimable was the being who was offering herself up as a sacrifice to some strange delusion. And he registered an inward vow that he would seek her, even though he had to travel the world through.

He had at least some clue. The information Rubini had conveyed about the letter written for the return of the ring was, beyond all doubt, true, and the address she had therein given would enable him to discover her.

He passed a restless night, revolving plans for the future. Over and over again he asked himself if it would be phantom-chasing to follow this woman?

She had avowed her love for him, and yet, yielding to some strange influence, had fled.

Was it not his duty to save her from herself? But would it be his lot to follow her, as the faithful Evangeliste followed the restless, never-staying Gabriel La Jeunesse, only after many years of weary journeying to be united in death?

On the following morning he hurried to Camden Town to Mrs. Holmwood, and speedily communicated to her the information he had gained.

"I fear she is lost to both of us," was the poor mother's first remark when he had finished his story. "That is a very hopeless view to take," he answered.

"Possibly so, but it's one warranted by all the circumstances of the case. It is my duty now to tell you that my husband is in America. He was a reckless, dissipated adventurer, and after squandering the small fortune I brought him he left me and my children to the mercy of the world. As Mary has developed in beauty and years he has made many attempts to take her from me, employing spies to watch her movements, so that I have had to shield her as the broad sun shields her young from the

talons of the swooping hawk. She has always told me she would not leave her mother, and the arguments they have at last used to inveigle her must have been powerful indeed. And for what purpose have they taken her? I shudder to contemplate. Can you suppose, after this, that there is any chance of recovering my stolen child? Even if you could discover her, what power have you or I to force her to return? Arguments, I fear, would be unavailing. She has gone. She has my blessing, but we shall never meet again. If she had not been dead to every natural feeling of a daughter, would she not have written to her broken-hearted mother? Such wanton cruelty will bring its own reward."

"I by no means take the gloomy view that you do," Robert answered, "and I cannot but think that she has been prevented writing by some strange and, to me, unaccountable reason. Moreover, I am persuaded that in going away she has acted from a sense of what she considered duty. She saw that her arguments with reference to the theatrical profession had proved deceptive. Wary and nearly hopeless, she shrank from becoming a burden again on your slender means. The way she has taken—a rough and thorny one, probably—was suddenly opened by those who never lost sight of her, and who availed themselves of this favourable opportunity to work upon her feelings; and the poor girl snatched at the straw thus held out and trampled on her own heart at the same time. I am fortunate enough to have time and means at my disposal. Could I employ them better than by endeavouring to bring back the fugitive—to restore her to the arms of her broken-hearted mother, and in so doing gain a true and honourable wife?"

"You are free to act as you like in the matter," the mother answered, her heart swelling with gratitude and emotion. "If your love is so strong for my poor girl as to dictate to you to follow her, I can only say, go, and Heaven will prosper you. I am proud of the privilege I enjoy in knowing a man so honourable and noble as yourself, and in return for all your goodness I can only give you tears and prayers."

"The tears reserve until they can be tears of joy. Your prayers I thank you for, and will try to deserve them. As soon as I have made my arrangements I shall start for New York and I trust that success will crown my mission."

When Robert left Mrs. Holmwood's house he immediately repaired to his friend Eldon, for, in spite of the different opinions held by the young men, Robert had great faith in his friend's judgment; but, with the strange perversity of human nature, though he sought it he did not always follow the advice given.

Eldon heard gravely all his friend had to say, and then, much to Robert's astonishment, expressed his entire approval of the proposed journey to New York.

"I daresay," he remarked, "you will be surprised at my not offering some opposition to your scheme. But the fact is I find that the longer a man lives the oftener he finds it necessary to alter his views. Six months ago if you had told me you were going to New York on such an errand, I should have thought you had taken leave of your senses. But now—"

Robert interrupted his friend with a loud laugh. He guessed very well what had caused the change of opinion, and could not resist the temptation to give him a quiet thrust.

"I am glad that my proposed journey has your approval," he said. "We have so often differed that it's quite a treat to find ourselves of the same mind. I am prepared for change in all things, but I always thought my esteemed friend Eldon was immutable. However, I find that even he has a vulnerable part through which he can be reached by the warm glances of a woman's eyes. Since you have been in love, Charlie, you have been another and a better man."

"Nonsense!" he answered. "There is certainly no difference in me, nor am I aware that I am in love. At any rate, I am responsible for my words and deeds. That is more than every one can say."

"I tell you what it is, Charlie," his friend replied, laughingly. "You were never intended for a Benedict. And though, so far, you have successfully out-rivalled my brother, I don't believe that you will ever get a wife."

"Indeed! That is a matter in which I alone am interested. You will be undeceived. When do you start for America?" he added, quickly, as if wishing to change the subject.

"In a very few days. I intend to telegraph tonight for a berth in one of the Cunard boats."

"What course of action do you intend to pursue in the event of finding Miss Holmwood?"

"I don't know."

"Don't know! That is rather singular, is it not?"

"No."

"But surely you have some defined purpose?"

"None whatever, beyond telling her that she is absolutely essential to my happiness."

"Tut. That is carrying the point too far. Supposing she is married, when you get there?"

"Married!" Robert repeated, in alarm.

"Yes. You will admit that it is not an impossibility."

"For Heaven's sake! Charlie, don't suggest this thing to me. If it were so I think I should—"

"What?" Eldon asked, as Robert did not seem inclined to finish the sentence.

"I think I should blow my brains out."

"Robert Ainsleigh!" exclaimed his friend, in a tone of severity. "If you have any respect for your manhood, any loathing for a coward, dimitas such an unworthy thought from your head. If I felt you could for an instant seriously contemplate such an act of rashness, I should almost feel that it was my duty to shun you."

"Forgive me, old fellow," said Robert, as he stretched forth his hand to Eldon. "I am very foolish, but you don't know how much I love this girl."

"However much you may love her, you would not be justified in playing the part of an idiot. Miss Holmwood shows you that she possesses some of the sterner stuff that true women are made of. Surely you would not prove yourself to be less a man than she is a woman."

"No. You are right," Robert replied. "But there is no madness like the madness begotten of unreciprocated love. Fortunately my love is returned. I have a strong faith in Miss Holmwood; nothing can destroy it. She has risen on the horizon of my life like a sun, and if she be lost to my view, then indeed will my life be one of darkness."

"You are talking nonsense. That feeling is but the frenzy of youth. A man grows out of that kind of thing."

"If I had not yet got into the twenties that might be so. But I flatter myself I have some judgment and stability of character. What I have stated is correct. A boy on whose lip the incipient down is commencing to display itself may be infatuated with some miss, and swear by the stars and moon and all the rest of it that her eyes are diamonds, her teeth pearls, etc., and that if she does not return his passion he will throw himself from London Bridge, or put his head beneath the wheels of a locomotive. Time, however, rolls on and he leaves off his jackets, and with them his nonsense, and wonders however he could have made such an idiot of himself with that 'stack-up' Miss Blank. I have had this experience and, but that you are such an oddity, I should say you had had it too. But when a man has passed the quarter of century of life he has a very different feeling to this. If ever he loves truly it is at this period. And though very few men obtain the objects of their first real love, you may depend upon it that the disappointment has a very marked effect upon their after lives, and they keep the memory of the loved one green until they fall into the sleep that knows no waking. I am quite sure I could never forget Miss Holmwood, and I will make her my wife."

"Si je puis say," added Eldon, laughing at his friend's earnestness.

"If I can then, and I think I can."

"I wish you success. Good-bye, old fellow. A pleasant journey."

"Good-bye. I wish you success in your suit with Ethel. Half a dozen small editions of Charlie Eldon will be a novelty."

"Bah! Go. Don't talk nonsense. A wife's all very well, but I protest against the children."

"We shall see. Adieu."

"Au revoir."

(To be continued.)

A PARIS journal, in its catalogue of the events of the year, states that during the year 1874 there died 19 sovereigns, chiefs of the state, or princes, French or foreigners; 64 politicians, functionaries, judges, or barristers; 22 prelates or ecclesiastics of high rank; 20 eminent, scientific, or literary men; 43 dignitaries of the French army or navy; four celebrated French physicians or surgeons; nine great merchants and manufacturers; 12 journalists; 11 painters, draughtsmen, sculptors, or engravers; 19 musicians or dramatic performers; and 22 influential personages.

EXTRAORDINARY WALKING MATCH.—Wonders in the muscular line will never cease. Perhaps the most extraordinary of the later sensations was the feat of a man named Howe, who the other day in windy weather and freezing, walked 131 miles in 2 hours 49 min. 17 sec., for a bet of 25l., carrying on his head a two-gallon stone bottle neck downwards. The most wonderful part of the performance was that he never once touched the jar with his hand. Howe is a big fellow of 14 stone and a marvel in this way.

We have heard of more than one pedestrian who can never keep his mouth, much less his hands, away from a liquor jar.

WOMAN'S RIGHTS IN ANCIENT EGYPT.—Bayard Taylor says it is not generally understood that woman in ancient Egypt was honoured and respected equally with man. There was among the Egyptians a lofty appreciation of the marriage tie. The wife's name was often placed before that of the husband, and the sons often bore the names of the mothers instead of those of the fathers. Women often sat upon the throne, and administered all the affairs of the government. The assertion so often heard in these days that woman has always occupied a position of subjection to man is glaringly false. In ancient Egypt he possessed no important right which was not shared by her.

TREVELIAN; OR, ENTOMBED ALIVE.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

It was early morning—a drizzling, light rain was falling on the tall dark firs and stunted alder bushes around the weird woman's hut on the hill of the Deep Well.

The old woman and her grandson had just left the hut, the woman to go on one of her wandering expeditions, the boy to sell the baskets he had been busy making, the market for which was the various railway stations on the way to London.

The woman carefully locked the door, trying the sufficiency of the fastening by shaking the door and pushing it with her knees, and, feeling satisfied that all was safe from intrusion, took from the wall of the house, close to the ground, a loose stone, and, putting the key into the hole, replaced the stone in its former resting-place.

"That'll be safe there till one o' us comes back again," said the old woman. "It'll likely be myself."

"Ye'll be in good time to catch the train for St. Armand's station," resumed the old woman, looking as she spoke at the sun, which was fast rising above the verge of the horizon.

"Yes," replied the boy, "we'll be in plenty time. You're going there too, aren't you?"

"No; I'm goin' to Broughton station."

"To Broughton station!" repeated the young man, in an angry voice, and with a dark look at the old woman as he spoke. "What are ye goin' to do there?"

"I'm goin' to do what you or another canna' do for me."

"Ye're goin' to Trevilian Castle," said the lad, raising his voice as he spoke. "There's nobody wantin' ye there. I'm sure ye'll get what ye got the last time ye went, when the old villain hounded ye from the place wif his dogs."

The old woman sighed deeply, but made no other reply.

"I don't know what takes ye there, or what call them Trevilians have after ye. If the old scoundrel comes to our house again, I'll throw him down the gully in earnest. It wasn't for the want of will I didn't do't the last time."

The old woman sighed again, but remained silent, as before.

"What is it takes ye to Trevilian, granny?" asked the young man, in a softened voice.

"I'll tell ye when I come home. It's a long story, and a sorrowful one."

"Maybe ye'll never come home, granny," said the lad, in an anxious voice. "If ye anger that wild man as ye did before, he'll kill ye as sure as a gun. Better to come to St. Armand's station first. I promised the young girls at the 'Royal Arms,' the last time I was there, that I'd bring you next time to read their fortunes on the cards, an' they'll pay ye well, besides maybe gettin' ye passed free on the railway."

"If I thought they could get me a free pass I would go there first," said the woman. "It's a heap o' money they makes us pay for an hour's ride. In the old coach time we only paid the same price for ridin' a whole day."

"Ay, but ye see the steam carriages goes over the same road in an hour's time, an' they likes to be paid for the road, no' the time."

It was finally settled that the old woman should go to St. Armand's station first, and in due time they arrived there.

As they arrived at the "Royal Arms" one of the girls, who was standing at the door, exclaimed in a pleased voice:

"Here's Tom, from the Hill of the Deep Well, with his baskets, an' he's brought his grandmother to tell our fortunes."

"I'm so glad," replied her companion, who now presented herself at the door.

"Ay," said Tom, who had heard what the girls said, and now came up to the door, accompanied by his grandmother, "an' hard work I had to bring her. She wanted to go to Trevilian, an' I said if she'd come here first, maybe the master 'ud get her passed to Trevilian free."

"Maybe he will," said the girl. "You heard about Sir Ralph Trevilian's being murdered?"

"Sir Ralph Trevilian murdered?" exclaimed the old woman, in a tone and with a look of inexplicable horror. "When did that happen and who did it?"

"Oh, it's a wonder ye didn't hear't before," said the girl. "It's more than a week since he was shot jist in the copse there, an' everybody thought it was his son that did it, but after the verdict was brought in guilty some other witnesses freed him. It's all in the papers to-day, but I didn't read it. An' look there," said she, as the train stopped on the line in front of the inn, "there's Sir Reginald in the train, an' Count Ramouski. He was here yesterday, seein' Sir Ralph."

"Here?" said the old woman, repeating the girl's words, as she turned her eyes from the railway carriage, on which for a moment they were bent with intense interest. "Did ye say he was here yesterday? I thought ye said he was murdered?"

"Well, so he is; but he's not dead yet. He's upstairs yet, and the doctor says he'll not live an hour."

"I must go an' see him," said the old woman. "Let me see where his room is."

"I can't do that," replied the girl, looking at the woman as if she believed her to be crazy. "We couldn't let anybody into the room of a gentleman like him without his own orders."

"Well, at any rate you can tell him that Widow Moore, from the Hill of the Deep Well, wants to see him."

"Yes, I'll bid the nurse tell him," said the girl. "Go, both o' ye, into the kitchen; I'll be downstairs in a minute, an' ye'll hear what he says."

The lad led the way into the kitchen, followed by his grandmother; but scarcely had they seated themselves when the girl returned, saying:

"Sir Ralph wants ye to go upstairs directly."

The old woman immediately rose and followed the girl upstairs, the latter on her return saying to Tom:

"What call has your grandmother to see a gentleman like Sir Ralph Trevilian?"

"She was his nurse," was Tom's reply, given in a curt manner.

Even on his dying bed the boy did not care to trust his grandmother near the man whom he knew to exercise such a strange influence over her and on their last interview had tried to murder her.

The old woman's lips moved in murmured prayers as she ascended the staircase and passed along the passages leading to Sir Ralph's chamber. Halting at the door, she said to the girl:

"You may leave me here; I'm not ready to go in yet. I'll knock at the door myself when I'm ready."

She stood there several minutes, with her hands clasped in silent prayer. Suddenly letting her hands fall by her side, she said, in a low tone:

"My sin has found me out. Heaven help me, as well as the poor man lying inside there. Oh, that I could die for him, that he would be given time to repent of the evil life he has led. It is more fitting I should die than he, with all his evil passions and unrepented sins, and my own evil deed the cause of all."

A low groan and some spoken words she could not distinguish the import of were heard within. She started, and, saying to herself in low, murmured words "While I am loitering here he is dying there," she, without knocking, opened the door and entered the room.

The nurse rose from her seat by the patient's bedside as she entered, saying, as if in reply to some observation of Sir Ralph's:

"Here's the woman now."

Sir Ralph raised his hand with a feeble motion to indicate to the nurse that he wished to be alone with his visitor.

The widow came forward with soft, noiseless steps, and, leaning over Sir Ralph's bed, gazed on his ashen face, on which the lines of death were but too plainly visible.

The woman's face exhibited strong emotion, which her pale brow and compressed lips showed she was doing her utmost to conceal.

"Ralph," she said, speaking in low tones, lest if she tried to use her voice clearly it would betray the distress she tried to conceal. "Ralph, have you prayed to Heaven to save your soul?"

"Yes," replied the dying man, "I have prayed to

Heaven for two hours, and in that time I have prayed more than I have done since I last knelt at your knee to pray."

He stopped, as if the exertion of speaking was too much for him, yet his voice was clear, and the first few words strongly spoken.

"Two hours ago," resumed he, "I prayed to Heaven from the depths of my soul to send you here!"

"Two hours ago," said the old woman, speaking in accents of awe, "I was on the road to Broughton Station to take the train for Trevilian; an' Tom made me come here almost against my will! Heaven sent me here, I had to come."

The woman spoke reverently.

"You were going to Trevilian to tell me again what you said when I was last at the Hill?"

"Even so, Ralph," was the answer, uttered in a soft, sad voice.

"Death reads lessons that nothing else will. You must stay with me till you close my eyes, and then go to Trevilian and tell them all. Oh!" added he, in accents full of deep woe—"oh! that it had been done a year ago! A year ago I could only guess that you were alive, and even that guess seemed the workings of a sin-stained conscience on my imagination. I will do it now, and let right be right once more."

The dying man lifted his heavy eye to her face with a painful meaning as he said:

"There is part of the wrong I have done that neither Heaven nor earth can make right. Ethel Annesley's husband is my murderer, and now awaits sentence of death in Newgate. Heaven knows I should be in Newgate, not he. I murdered every day of his youth till I was powerless to raise hand or foot against him. Even at the last I goaded him on to what he did with falsehoods and false accusation."

"He's not in Newgate," said the woman. "I saw him in a railway carriage only a few minutes ago, and the girl downstairs told me he was acquitted."

As the woman ceased speaking the dying man tried to raise himself up; her words seemed to have infused new vigour into him.

It was but for a moment, and his feeble head sank back on the pillow again.

He tried to speak, but it could not be; his life was ebbing fast away.

At last he murmured, in accents scarcely audible:

"Thank Heaven! thank Heaven!"

He tried to lift his thin, white hand to the face that bent over him with an expression of deep, unutterable love; but the poor, weak hand sank down never to move on earth again.

He smiled—a faint, weak smile—in the woman's face bent so close to his, and then the weary eyes closed, the mouth fell, and the poor, unclothed spirit passed from the still room out into the silent land.

The woman stood for many minutes looking with a steadfast gaze on the face of the dead. She could not at once realize that the man she had seen so short a time since in all the strength of his manhood now lay before her powerless to speak or move for evermore—dust, fit only for companionship with the dust, a thing men bury out of their sight.

She put his hand, which he had last tried to raise to her face, inside the quilt, as if she was afraid it would feel the cold.

Then she smoothed the pillow, and kissed both cheek and brow, and, as she touched the already clay-cold face, the terrible truth forced itself upon her soul, and, covering her face with both hands, the old woman lifted up her voice and wept.

She sank on her knees, and, sobbing as if her heart was breaking, tried to pray for the soul of him she had so loved and sinned for.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE morning after the day on which Sir Ralph Trevilian died at the little hotel of the "Royal Arms," Count Ramouski, his family, and his guests, consisting of General Neville, his grandson, and Ethel, sat at breakfast.

Ethel, who had not heard of all the suffering her husband had gone through until he had come to tell her of it himself, was now almost convalescent.

Her arm was still in a sling, but she herself, freed from the fear and care which had made life a misery during the past six months, was growing strong, and the roses were again beginning to blossom on her cheek.

They were, as we have said, lingering over the breakfast-table, their conversation still running upon the events of the past six months, when Lovell entered, and, coming up to Ethel, said:

"There is an old woman downstairs who desires to see you. She says she is the woman who lives at the hill of the Deep Well, and you will know her by that better than by her name."

"I do, indeed, know her well, and love her dearly," exclaimed Ethel. "Send her up to my room at once."

She rose to leave the room as she spoke, but was prevented doing so by the countess, who said: "Pray let her be brought up here. We have all a deep interest in one who may be said to have saved your life and certainly acted in the most kind and generous way."

"I do not believe she would like to come up here, among you all," said Ethel. "Her nature is one of such sturdy independence that I think she would look upon it as an intrusion, and that is a situation she would never put herself in."

"I should certainly like to see the woman and hear her talk," said the countess. "She is evidently no common woman, and, independent of her kindness to you, her ability to tell you where your husband was confined makes her a person of no little interest."

"I shall go downstairs and try to make her come among you, if possible," said Ethel, as she left the room, passing Lovell, who waited that he might bring her to the place where he had left the old woman.

"I am so glad to see you," said Ethel, going up to the old woman and kissing her cheek, as she took the attenuated hand extended to her in both her own. "But how is this?" added she, looking in the white face before her. "You have been ill; you are as pale as death."

"I have not been ill," was the quiet reply, "but I have been wading through the deep waters of sorrow—sorrow I never thought to feel. It is partly to speak of this that I come here. Sir Ralph Trevylian is dead; did ye know that?"

"Yes, we had a telegram last night from the hotel-keeper. My husband telegraphed at once to London for an undertaker to be sent down. And Harry (that is my husband's real name) is to go this morning to St. Armand's, and see that the body be sent, with the respect due to his rank, to Trevylian Castle."

"That he must not do," replied the woman. "It is to prevent that I came here. His body must never enter Trevylian Castle, nor lie in the mausoleum there."

"Why! What can be the meaning of your words? Because the poor man was murdered, or because he died evil in his lifetime, that is no reason why he should not be interred in the place where his forefathers lie."

"But Sir Ralph Trevylian's forefathers don't lie there. He was not born a knight, had no title to the castle and lands he held so long. He was the son of a poor labouring man, the son of a servant woman."

The woman spoke in an agitated voice, but with a calm air that assured her hearer that she herself believed implicitly in the truth of the story she told.

"Will you come to the breakfast parlour? My husband and the Count and Countess Ramouski are there; they all know of your kindness to me, and begged me to bring you to the parlour, instead of to my own room."

To Ethel's surprise, the woman answered with alacrity, as if it was the very thing she wished.

"Yes, I'll go to the parlour," and then added, as she followed Ethel: "It is just as it should be. What was done in the silence and darkness of night must be proclaimed in the noonday; the sin committed in a corner must be shouted from the housetop."

She entered the elegantly furnished breakfast parlour with its wealth of pictures and mirrors, as much at her ease as if she had dwelt in such all her life, and replied to the words addressed to her by the countess and the gentlemen as if accustomed to such company—no awkward shyness, no false modesty, which more than ought else disturbs the intercourse between the peasant and the peer.

She accepted a cup of tea, but would not touch the bread offered with it.

"No," said she, "I have eaten nothing since I left my own house, and I will not eat till I enter it again. This tea will help me to tell my tale, and I drink it for that purpose."

Having drunk the tea she laid the empty cup upon a table which stood near, and then clasping her hands together, laid them in her lap as if she thus prepared for the task she had imposed upon herself.

"I have already told her, who from the hour of her birth was the rightful owner of Trevylian Castle"—as the weird woman spoke she signified by looking at Ethel that it was her she meant—"that the man who now lies murdered at St. Armand's station is not, nor never was, Lord of Trevylian! And now I declare solemnly, before you all, and thank Heaven I was bidden by him on his death-bed to do so, that he is my son."

"Your son!"

"Your son!" was echoed from all sides of the room.

"Sir Ralph Trevylian your son!" repeated General

Neville, rising from his seat and placing himself in front of the woman so that he might see her face as he spoke. "It is impossible; you must be under some strong delusion. I have known him from his birth, known both his father and mother, the latter one of the most beautiful and amiable of women."

"I am under no delusion, neither am I crazy," the woman replied, speaking in the same quiet tones as before. "If ye will hear me to the end, perhaps ye will believe me, and if ye don't they are yet living who will bear witness to the truth to which I testify."

"We are most anxious to hear what you have to say," observed Count Ramouski. "Although Sir Ralph Trevylian is now dead, and his castle and lands both come of right to this lady, yet it is of grave importance that previous to the interment of his body the truth of what you say should be clearly ascertained."

"I have already said that the man who was called in his lifetime Sir Ralph Trevylian was my son, and I will now tell you how it was so. Leaving it to yourselves to examine into the evidence, I will tell ye how to find it. I was a young mother. Ralph was my first baby, and was only two weeks old when I was sent for to go to Trevylian Castle to nurse the heir to Trevylian. I wept bitterly at the thought of leaving my own darling baby. Well I might, it was to be a dear misery to me to blight all my life. But my husband was a hard man, and the price they offered, a guinea a week, was too much money for him to refuse. His sister, a young widow without children, whose husband was but lately dead, offered to take my baby in charge and keep my house, both for a shilling a month; so my husband took my baby from my arms and went with me in a carriage sent for me, and engaged me to nurse the young heir for a year and a day, whether I was willing or not. The baby was a week old when it was put into my arms, and so like my own, with his black eyes and hair an inch long, that I took it him at once, and used to please myself by thinking it was my own child I was nursing."

"The child thrived well, but his beautiful lady mother was fading as fast as the snow melts in the sun. The doctor was there twice every day, and one day, while the nurse was bathing the baby, he took a convulsive fit."

"The doctor came into the nursery, and the fit was soon over; but he told both the nurse and me that the child would most likely be subject to such, and if he took them again we were on no account to let his mother know. I remember his words well; they frightened me enough when I first heard them spoken."

"You must never hint to his mother that he has taken a fit. All her own mother's children, with the exception of herself, died in their infancy of such fits. Were she to hear of his having one it might be her death!"

"That very evening the baby took another fit, worse than the first. He was in the nurse's arms when he took the second fit; and many a day I thanked Providence that he never took one while I held him. I think in all the long, miserable days I passed since then it would have sent me crazy if he had."

"The next night, after ten o'clock, Lady Trevylian asked for the baby, and the nurse lifted him out of his cradle and brought him to her ladyship. In half an hour she came hurrying back, saying as she came into the nursery:

"The child's in a fit; it was all I could do to hide it from her ladyship."

"The doctor had just left the house, and we sent after him as fast as horses' feet could speed, and put the child into a warm bath, as the doctor ordered us to do when he had the other fits. But this time he got worse in the water, instead of getting better."

"We tried everything the nurse could think of. As for me, I knew little about baby illnesses then. All we did was of no avail; the child grew worse and worse. Sir Hugh was in London—had been gone for three days; there was a division in Parliament, and he had to go—so there was nobody to apply to as to what we ought to do. The baby's breath was getting weaker every minute. At last the man who was sent for the doctor came back to say he had set off to see a person five miles from his own house, and he would be sent to the castle the minute he arrived at home."

"As we heard the message we looked in each other's faces with dismay. The baby was fast dying—we could not hide that from ourselves; and if he died without the doctor seeing him, we knew his father would never forgive us."

"The child will be dead before the doctor can see him if we wait till he comes here," said the nurse. "It is our best plan to wrap him well up, and take the close carriage and bring him to the doctor's. It is a lovely evening, and it will do him good."

"I feared the motion of the carriage, and I said so."

"You stupid woman!" said the nurse, "the motion of the carriage will to the baby on your lap be like the rocking of his cradle; and at any rate, she added, shaking her head, 'there's nothing on this earth will ever do the baby harm or good. I pray it mayn't kill his mother, the nurse she must get when she next asks for him.'"

"We did not take more time to think of it. The poor little baby was no more; the breath had gone before we left the house; but it was well wrapped up in a cashmere shawl of its mother's, and with it in my arms we started for the doctor's house."

"I knew I was carrying a dead body, and so did the nurse; but I think she was beside herself with fear, and she would not let me say it was dead. When I said to her, which I did over and over again, 'I am sure the baby is dead,' she always replied, 'Nonsense! it will be doing finely before we get home again.'"

"We had to pass my husband's cottage on our way, and, when within a few yards of the door, we saw a light burning in the kitchen."

"Go in and see your little Ralph," said the nurse, "and take the baby with you—the night is so lovely he'll be the better of a minute or two's change."

"I was glad of the chance of seeing my own baby, and I went into the house. There was not a creature there, only my baby asleep in the cradle. I think the evil one tempted me. In one moment I slipped off the cambric night-dress that was on the dead child, and put it on my own living baby, putting my Ralph's printed, coarse night-dress on the little dead heir of Trevylian."

"It scarcely took me a minute to do it, and I was back in the carriage with the living baby before my sister-in-law, who had gone on some little errand to the barn, returned to the house, and I saw her look after the carriage, never once suspecting I had been there."

"Let me see the baby," said the nurse. I did so, and she gave a sigh of relief as she looked on the sleeping child. "I knew he would be better for the drive," said she. "Thank Heaven he's not dead; I think if he had been, Sir Ralph would have had me tried for murder. I'm sure it would have been the last lady I would have got to nurse, he's such an unreasonable man. I wish," she said, a little afterward, "I wish I was well out of his house. I'm almost sure Lady Trevylian won't live, an' if she dies when I'm there it'll damage my character for being a good nurse."

"The doctor was at home when we arrived, and laughed heartily when he saw the child looking so well and heard the nurse's account of how frightened we were about him."

"The baby looks better and healthier than ever I saw him," said he. "The air has done him good. You must keep him in the air a great deal, now that the weather is so fine."

"It was the same with Lady Trevylian and Sir Hugh when he came home a few days after, both were delighted with the healthy appearance of the baby. Every one but the poor woman who had done the sinful deed; even then my punishment began."

"Many a tear I shed to think how I had given away my precious baby to another, and how much happier I would have been nursing him in my own cottage. It was not hypocritical tears I shed when they came to tell me that there was a dead child lying in my little home. I know my child was dead to me, although he might be a pride and a pleasure to others."

"There was a mole the size of a sixpence under the arm of the dead baby, and when his mother took my child to show him to her friends I used to tremble with fear lest she should take it into her head to show them the mole. They thought enough of it to mention it after his name when it was written in the big Bible."

"But her ladyship died before the baby was two months old, and she was so poorly all the time she was scarcely able to hold the child, or, at last, to speak to it."

"When she died she made Sir Hugh promise he would keep me in the house as long as my husband would let me stay; and he did so. I was eight long, weary years there, my sin staring me in the face every day."

"He was a bold boy, and Sir Hugh would not have him contradict, and many a day I had to bear being struck by my own child, and scolded by Sir Hugh if I dared rebuke the boy for his rudeness."

(To be continued.)

TREE-PLANTING TOO NEAR HOUSES.—Do not plant, under any circumstances, near your house trees that will ultimately attain large dimensions, or the day will come when you or your successors will

have to choose between cutting down handsome and favourite old specimens or suffering from the gloom and moisture generated by their too close proximity to the house. Many a fine old mansion has been thus overshadowed, and the inmates have had to elect between unhealthy damp and shade on the one hand and the uprooting of a venerable tree on the other. Equally avoid planting tall-growing trees where, when they attain maturity, they will interfere with a fine prospect or intercept the view of any beautiful object. When first planted their ultimate magnitude is overlooked, but the planter must have an eye to the future. In planting masses of trees, not only size and shape but also the colour of the foliage must be an element in determining the selection of the species to be planted. The lively light-green leaves of deciduous trees in spring, and even their graceful spray in winter, wonderfully relieve the sombre foliage of conifers and other evergreen trees.

THE RACE NOT ALWAYS TO THE SWIFT.

A FOX came one day at full speed to a pond to drink.

A frog who was sitting there began to croak at him.

"There," said the fox, "be off with you, or I'll swallow you!"

The frog, however, replied:

"Don't give yourself such aim; I am swifter than you."

At this the fox laughed; but as the frog persisted in boasting of his swiftness the fox at length said:

"Now, then, we will both run to the next town, and thus we shall see which can go the faster."

Then the fox turned round, and as he did so, the frog leaped up into his bushy tail. Off went the fox, and when he reached the gate of the city, he turned round again to see if he could espy the frog coming after him. In doing so, the frog hopped off his tail to the ground. The fox, after looking all about without being able to see his competitor in the race, turned round once more to enter the city, when he beheld the little croaker.

"So you have come at last, Master Reynard. I am just going back again, for I verily thought you meant not to come at all!"

Such is the world, and the men in it—a tissue of deception throughout.

SOCIETY.

Of all empty, vain, and worthless efforts, that of "cultivating society" merely for the sake of having certain well-known names upon one's visiting list is the most ridiculous. It is a waste of time, patience, and money. Domestic happiness and friendly hospitality are thereby cast aside, and life is spent in the dreariest sort of acting, for which one receives neither the applause of others nor of his or her own conscience.

Many a family, collectively and individually, work for this false end. They give entertainments that nearly ruin them to people they care nothing for, with whom they have no sympathy, and who have no earthly sympathy with them; while congenial persons, who really have some liking for them, are quite neglected, because there is nothing to be gained by knowing plain Mrs. Brown or Mr. Smith.

Oh, dreary evenings, given to the reception of a formal circle of sombodies! Oh, woful banquets, at which our sombodies nibble a little at the costly dainties provided by their ambitious entertainers! Oh, what ashes lie at the heart of this Dead Sea fruit!

If you wish to be happy, you must open the doors of your home to those whom you esteem or love. You must take for your friends those who suit you. You must, however rich, make your entertainments opportunities for social meetings, and not occasions for display. And it is far better to have beneath your roof those who are honoured and comforted by your hospitality than those who condescend to visit you because you court them. Proud ignorance is always the likeliest to fancy itself every poor person's superior; and you probably would not recognize real superiority by anything in its manner or bearing.

TREATMENT OF ANIMALS.—Animals should be treated kindly, because—1. They were created for the use of man by the same Power that created man himself. 2. The humane and kind treatment of all animals under our control is one of our greatest sources of pleasure and happiness. 3. It is much more profitable, pecuniarily, to take good care and deal kindly with every creature Heaven hath given us. 4. Cruel treatment of animals is a sin and a transgression, which will surely be punished sooner or later.

THE LATE LORD MAYOR.—Sir Andrew Lusk, who

retired last November, had to receive the Duke of Edinburgh's Imperial bride with more than Imperial splendour. Later came the Emperor of Russia, and the hospitalities connected therewith were not of a trumpery character. Then there were banquets, regular and irregular, all these festivities crowning St. Andrew's year with exceptional éclat. Yet the ex-Lord Mayor contrived to do it all without squandering a fortune. His expenses, we are told, will not exceed 20,000*l.* for his official year. The Corporation allowed him 10,000*l.* to maintain the splendour and dignity of his office, and he expended something over 10,000*l.* from his private purse.

SCIENCE.

At Paysandu, a little town on the Uruguay, during the last season of 1874, about 150,000 ox-tongues were packed in hermetically-sealed tins, and shipped to this country. The saladeros in the neighbourhood carry on their slaughtering operations upon a large scale, and, in addition to providing the paysandu tongues, are also large exporters of hides.

TRANSPARENT PAPER.—The following ingredients are to be mixed and boiled for eight hours:—Bleached boiled linseed-oil, 40 parts by weight; lead turnings, 2; oxide of zinc, 10; Venice turpentine, 1 part. After cooling, mix with the following, with constant stirring:—White copal, 10 parts by weight; sandarac, 1 part. Soak the paper in the composition thus prepared.

FINE WIRE.—The old method of making very fine gold and platinum wire has been brought to great perfection. It is done by coating the metal with silver, drawing it down to the finest number, and then removing the coating by acid, leaving the almost imperceptible interior wire, which, in an experiment made in London, was so attenuated that a mile's length weighed only a grain. Such fine wires are used for the so-called "spider-lines" crossing the field of the telescope and the microscope, and are almost invisible to the unassisted eye.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY IN ESSEX.—A remarkable archaeological discovery has been made at H-ybridge, near Maldon. Six stone coffins, several metal ones, and other remains of antiquarian interest have been unearthed by Mr. E. H. Benthall, late M.P. for Maldon, and a member of the Essex Archaeological Society. Information of this "rich find" has been communicated to the society, and we believe the objects will eventually be deposited in the Colchester Museum. A deputation from the society will visit the spot in order to note the position of the coffins, and other particulars.

The two new large armour-plated ships contracted for by the Admiralty have been respectively taken by Messrs. Napier and Co. and by Messrs. Elder and Co., both of whose works are on the Clyde. A correspondent states that the reserve price of the authorities was 300,000*l.* The large builders on the Thames offered to construct the ships at from 8,000*l.* to 10,000*l.* below the estimate. The Messy people were prepared to execute the order for about 270,000*l.*, but the Scotch firms asserted that they could do the work for something like 252,000*l.*, or about 40,000*l.* under their southern competitors.

DANGER OF BENZINE SCOURING.—M. Dumas, at a recent meeting of the French Academy of Sciences, stated that, in examining the process of scouring fabrics as usually practised by cleaners of old clothes (washing in benzine), he had discovered a novel and dangerous cause of fire. Workmen engaged in this industry had frequently complained of the benzine becoming inflamed during the scrubbing; and in order to test the question, M. Dumas caused a piece of cashmere to be dipped in for a length of 18 feet. Every time the stuff partially emerged from the bath, while being rubbed between the hands, a sharp pricking sensation upon those members and on the face was felt; and finally sparks were emitted from the fabric, sufficient, if the scouring had been briskly continued, to have ignited the inflammable fluid.

A METHOD OF VENTILATING IDEAS.—A collection of prehistoric skulls, found in caves in the South of France, was recently exhibited before the Scientific Association at Lille. Every one of these skulls had been perforated, and one of them three times, by a round hole. Anatomists declare that the operations must have been performed during the lifetime of the patient. In one instance the patient had obviously died from inflammation, but in the others there was every reason to believe that the patient survived the process. A similar custom of trepanning is practised at the present day among some of the South Sea Islanders, but the cave men must have practised surgery with much ruder instruments. Whether the patients were operated on for headache, insanity, epilepsy, or to ventilate their ideas, must remain uncertain.

SUN SPOTS.—A record of sun spots has been made

from November 16 to December 16 inclusive. The photographic picture of the 16th shows the group of spots seen on the 14th, consisting of several very small spots. The next picture was taken on the 19th, when one large spot appears near the place where we should look for the group. Clouds prevented photographing again until the 25th, when a large spot was seen near the centre of the disc, preceded by a smaller one. On the 26th no change took place, except that caused by the sun's axial motion. From this time until December 10, on account of clouds and wind, but three pictures were taken, and no spots were observed except a very small group on December 4. On December 10 a group of good size appeared, of which five photographs have been taken, showing marked changes during its passage across the disc. The picture of the 10th shows three spots of moderate size just within the eastern limb. On the 12th the most westerly of these was surrounded by small groups arranged so as to form nearly a complete circle. On the 15th the group consisted of five distinct spots of good size. On the 16th no change.

PORTABLE STEAM WINCH.—A handy little machine was exhibited at the late Exposition at Vienna, which is a combined steam winch and pump, intended for the use of contractors and others. The whole machine is carried on a rectangular frame of 7 inches by 3 inches channel iron. The boiler is placed in the centre of the frame; it is supported by wrought iron brackets, and fired from one side. The engine has a single cylinder, vertical and inverted, actuated by light cast iron angle framing, which is bolted to the boiler at its upper end. The winch, in the construction of which there is nothing calling for special mention, is placed on the front of the frame, and driven from the engine in the usual way. A small centrifugal pump is placed at the hinder end of the machine and is driven by a strap from the fly-wheel of the engine, which has a turned rim for the purpose. The engine can, of course, be used to drive a circular saw or other machinery, external to itself, when required, and is, in every respect, a handy affair. The whole is carried upon four wooden wheels, and fitted with shafts for horse transport. The boiler is intended to work at 30 lbs. pressure.

OAK TIMBER.—Oak timber is rapidly disappearing from Europe, although half of the area of Sweden, one-fourth that of Norway, one-sixth that of Switzerland, and 780,000 square miles in European Russia are said to be yet in forest. The consumption of oak in France has doubled during the last 50 years; she requires 15,000,000 cubic feet yearly for wine casks alone, 750,000 cubic feet for building purposes, 600,000 cubic feet for her fleet, and 150,000 cubic feet for railway cars; 800,000*l.* worth of staves were imported in 1826; 5,000,000*l.* worth are now needed. Since losing Alsace and Lorraine, France contains 150,000,000 acres; 20,000,000 of the surface is covered with forest. In Norway the Administration of Forests declares that it is necessary to stop the cutting of timber. Holland and Belgium are nearly denuded of timber, and are large importers. North Germany is rich in forest, but within half a century has begun to cut down young trees. Austria has sold her forests since railways have been introduced. In Italy no forests remain. Spain and Greece are almost absolutely woodless. The southern coast of the Mediterranean are almost forestless. Wood, for all purposes of construction, is becoming scarcer and dearer in all parts of the United States yearly.

DIMENSIONS OF THE EARTH.—Two German scientific men, Messrs. Behm and Wagner, have recently published the results of some very accurate measurements that they have made respecting the dimensions of the earth. From these it appears that the length of the polar axis is 12,712,136 metres, that of the minimum equatorial diameter, which is situated 103 deg. 14 min. east of the meridian of Paris, or 76 deg. 46 min. west, is 12,732,701 metres, whilst the maximum diameter at 13 deg. 14 min. east, and 166 deg. 46 min. west, is 12,756,583 metres. They estimate the total surface of the globe at 509,940,000 square kilometres, whilst its volume is equal to 1,082,860,000,000 cubic kilometres. The circumference of the globe on its shortest meridian is 40,000,098 metres, whilst that of the longest is 40,069,908 metres. The oceans and glaciers occupy 375,127,950 square kilometres. The total number of inhabitants of the earth is estimated at 1,391,000,000; viz., 306,530,000 in Europe, 798,000,000 in Asia, 203,300,000 in Africa, whilst the population of America is 84,542,000, and that of Oceania 4,438,000. The population of the towns and cities exceeding 50,000 inhabitants is 69,378,500, or about one-twentieth part of the total population of the globe, leaving nineteen-twentieths of the inhabitants for the villages and smaller towns.

REGISTRATIONS OF DESIGNS.—It is in contemplation to move the Designs Office from Whitehall to premises closely adjacent to those occupied by the

Patent Office. This change of locality is expected to be followed by important alterations in the administration of the department, as it will be transferred to the control of the Commissioners of Patents instead of remaining under the Board of Trade. For this purpose a Bill will be brought in early next session, but the office itself is to be moved at once, without waiting for the necessary administrative changes, as the premises it now occupies are required for the Railway Commission. Suggestions have been made that the system under which designs are registered should be in many respects assimilated to that now in force as regards patents, and it is therefore most probable that the various descriptions of registered inventions and designs will be printed, as the specifications of patents now are. Another necessary improvement will be the preparation and printing of indexes, those at present existing being only manuscript, and very imperfect. The abolition of all fees for searches will be made at once.

THE BROTHERS.

HESTER CARLYNE'S kitchen were upon this last evening but one of the old year that air of expectancy and suspense of which our English kitchens are capable. (At the moment that the tall clock struck six it was empty, but the supper-table laid for five, the white and laden shelves seen through the open door of the pantry, and the savoury odours within the stove oven, gave token of some approaching and festive event.)

The clock had scarce ceased striking when the outer door opened to admit the master of the house, and with him the nipping air and flying snowflakes of the winter night.

"Bitter cold," he said, divesting himself of coat, hat and mittens.

"That it is," replied his wife, emerging from the milk-room, and steadying in one hand a pan of new-laid eggs, while she quickly closed the door behind her with the other.

"Is the sitting-room getting warm, Janie?" she inquired of a blithe, fair-faced girl who just then appeared.

"I have been looking at the fire," the girl rejoined; "I thought it needed stoking to."

She ignored the fact that she had stolen away warily to give one keen, long look from the sitting-room window down the straight white road, and then one still longer look into the mirror above the mantel, which she had duly polished and wreathed with holly in the pauses of the day's more serious occupations.

"I hope the boys will not be late," quoth John Carlyne, settling himself to thaw before the fire.

"Those pullets beat all," remarked his wife, depositing the pan of eggs; "laying all through this cold weather."

"Don't forget that eggs are worth twopence each in the shop," suggested John Carlyne, thrusting his feet into what he was pleased to call his slippers.

"Pooh!" rejoined his wife, with good-humoured contempt, "we can afford the boys a good meal once a year," and she whisked the eggs she had broken with liberal energy.

The good man subsided. This hint was only a part of the well-meant "chaff" in which he was wont to indulge with his "wimmin folks." Presently, as he thawed, his eyes fell upon Janie sliding around with the somewhat guilty consciousness of having nothing to do.

"Well, Janie, it appears to me you're smartened up considerably to-night. Isn't that so?"

"Why, uncle, this is nothing but my old brown delaine. I've been ironing it over."

"Oh, yes, I see," he replied, with a sly twinkle.

"It is all right, Janie. I hope we shall keep it all in the family—that's what I hope."

"Now, pa, you're too bad," remonstrated the elder woman. "Tisn't fair, Janie. By-the-hye, did you let down the curtains in the sitting-room? Better do it: it'll keep out the cold."

Janie slipped out, glad of an excuse to hide her blushes.

"It is too soon to begin to joke Janie, pa," said Mrs. Carlyne. "If Will does fancy her, he's never yet said a word to make her think so. And it isn't fair. It will set her against him."

"Janie doesn't care for Will Carlyne, ma. Can't you see that?" said the old farmer, sententiously. "If she has got a notion for either of the boys, it is Gabriel."

And he turned himself tenderly, like a roasting apple, before the blaze and glow.

The good wife paused, with her egg-whisk in mid-air.

"How you talk, John!" she said, in a tone of protest.

"Wait and see," was the brief rejoinder.

"But Gabriel would never think of Janie," she

said, with almost a whimper in her pathetic tone. "A girl we took out of the workhouse! He never would, with his college learning and his city notions and high ways. Why, it would be dreadful for Janie to care for Gabriel!"

Mrs. Carlyne was actually pale at the idea. "Let it work, ma, let it work. Young folks will be young folks. I believe now I hear the sound of horses' feet."

"Bless me! why, supper won't be done this half-hour."

And, this thought dispelling all others, the mother bustled about her work.

Janie meanwhile, in the privacy of the sitting-room, was giving after her own fashion one little moment to the thrill and rapture of conscious power and conscious passion.

The windows were rapidly crusting over with frost-work; it was useless, therefore, to gaze without for the expected guests. She drew the curtains, stretched her hands a moment towards the fire, turned up the lamp, and again approached the glass.

She was a beautiful girl, of a type altogether out of place on this bleak northern farm; dark brilliant eyes, blue, brown or black in different lights and moods, and fair hair shining and rippling in luxuriant braids. It was easy enough to see that she was a waif and a stray in her present condition, and that if the workhouse indeed had given her into the Carlynes' keeping some mystery or strategy was involved.

Some dim sense of what this mystery might be shone in the girl's eyes as she gazed at that moment in the glass—some hint of an inheritance far, far different from her present possessions—some gleam from distant regions of romance and ambition whose nature was yet unknown. The petty vanity and trivial confusion went out of her face. Deep and tender and wistful, her eyes seemed to invoke futurity; the red lips parted, her bosom heaved.

Suddenly she started. The sound of wheels came crisp and musical through the frosty air. The dim vision, the half-forgotten memory faded. She was Janie again, Mrs. Carlyne's Janie, without other name or place in the wide world. And the boys were coming and supper ready, and for an instant it seemed coarse and disgusting when Mr. Carlyne was holding out the lantern from the back door, and Will was saying, "Don't come out in the cold, father—I'll get it," as he sprang from the carriage; and Gabriel was asking gently, rather lazily as usual, if all were ready, and then the door closed, and they drove on to the barn, and Mr. Carlyne rubbed his hands and said, "I'm glad they're here. Such a stinging night!" and the mother said, "Yes, indeed," as she slipped up her apron, and Janie went back to the kitchen to await the entrance of the guests.

The elder of the "boys" entered first. He was Dr. Carlyne—not Gabriel—to the world in which he lived, and one wondered almost that he should be "Gabriel" even to his mother. He was past thirty, tall, dark, perhaps handsome. A cold, superior, ambitious man—that was the character which betrayed itself in every gesture and look, in his greeting to his parents, in the controlled and not quite natural way in which he took and dropped Janie's hand.

Will was different—fair, merry and frank.

"Why, mother, home never looked half as pleasant before as it does to-night. And you grow younger every year—doesn't she, Janie?" said he.

"While Janie grows older, eh, Will?" asked his father, with a significant smile.

"I don't see that Janie changes much. It isn't necessary," the young man said, lightly, blushing.

"Come to supper," the mother interposed. "It is over a year since you were home, Gabriel," she went on, as they seated themselves around the table.

"Will gave us a fortnight at midsummer."

"Yes, in time for the haymaking," said Will.

"There was more than haymaking going on, if I remember right," from the father; "picking and boating—eh, Janie?"

"Oh, yes, we were quite gay," she answered. "Not what Gabriel would call gay, but gay for us."

"Do you suppose my ideas of gaiety are peculiar to myself?" Gabriel inquired, looking into Janie's face fully, for the first time, and avoiding, as he was apt to, the use of her name.

She looked back. It moved her, evidently, even to meet his eye; more to have him address her thus directly.

"You are accustomed to very different things," she said; "different people and different pleasures."

"For all that," he rejoined, "I am not always gay," and he smiled a smile which warmed the chilly dignity of his face.

Will Carlyne and his mother sat late over the fire that night. All Mrs. Carlyne's real comfort came

through Will. He gossiped with her like a girl. First about Gabriel. Gabriel was doing well. He had a well-furnished house in a fashionable neighbourhood, and not unfrequently carriages were seen standing before the door. He drove a stylish turn-out himself, and his overcoat was, as his mother saw, trimmed with sealskin. He was in society, too, and went among rich and distinguished people. Whether he was in love or engaged Will could not tell. Often they did not meet once a week. Gabriel lived in the centre of the city, and Will in the suburbs. His place was in the great mill, busy from seven till six, too tired often to dress and go out. But how did he spend his evenings? Oh, he read and played chess or went to a lecture. And he liked his boarding-house? It was comfortable enough. Besides, it was cheap. Will supposed he lived for a quarter what it cost Gabriel.

"I never knew you were close, Will."

"I'm not, mother, but I'm saving up. I'm going to be a rich man one day."

"That isn't everything, dear, to be a rich man."

"No, but it will be the road to what I want."

"And what is it you want so very much?"

He hesitated a minute.

"There's no need of my being ashamed of it, mother. I want Janie."

The mother was silent, with a little bitterness in her heart.

"Janie ought not to expect to be the wife of a rich man," she said, at last.

"Perhaps not; but that seems what she is fitted for. What a splendid little beauty she is, mother."

Sometimes I compare her with Gabriel's grand ladies, of whom I catch glimpses only. They can't be compared with her, neither in looks nor grace."

"They know more."

"I'm not sure. Janie is well educated."

"There is only one thing, Will—her birth; what birth? When you are a rich man you won't like to reflect that the mother of your children was picked up out of the workhouse."

Will Carlyne winced.

"What ails you, mother? You never talked so about Janie before. It seems to me that you are hard."

"I don't mean to be. I only want you to be cautious."

"She rose and bid him good night."

He kissed her.

He did not mean to kiss her coldly, but he did, and she felt it. The girl was more to him than his mother.

Perhaps it is hardly fair to Dr. Carlyne to say that he feared his few days' visit to his old home was going to bore him. He had nothing in common with the farm, the stock, the choice apples and the local news. He was rather disgusted to hear, at breakfast, that a party was to be invited for the following evening, in honour of his coming home.

The invitations must be given out to-day. One of you must drive Janie, and the other take Robert and the cart and go to gather evergreens. I suppose you will have to draw lots," said the mother.

"I could never undertake Robert and the evergreens, mother, so the drawing of lots would be superfluous," said Dr. Carlyne, looking very handsome and somewhat oriental in his dressing-gown, and preparing to ensconce himself with his paper-knife and review by the sitting-room fire.

Will saw his mother's face cloud.

"She was going to do her share of work to entertain them. It seemed hard that she could not have their co-operation."

Will wanted, too, to make amends for last night.

"I will go to the woods, mother. I want no better fun. I presume Gabriel will not object to drive Janie."

Janie, with pencil and paper, was making a list of widely scattered families who were to be bidden. She stole a look at Dr. Carlyne, and met his eyes fixed upon her, not admiringly, not with pleasure, but with a frowning glance.

"If I did, I could scarcely be expected to say so," he rejoined slyly. "At what time do we start?"

Janie sprang up rather petulantly.

"Ray! it's give up the party," she said. "Every one seems to think it a bore."

"I don't think it a bore," said Will; "I think it will be splendid. And if Gabriel prefers his book for entertainment, I can drive you this morning, and get the evergreens this afternoon."

Strangely enough, the brilliant colour went out of Janie's face at this proposal. It returned when Dr. Carlyne replied, in his indolent fashion:

"Your assumptions are quite cool. Master Will. Thank you for consigning me to the chimney corner, but I intend to do my part like a man, and am now going to put the ponies in while Janie completes her list and wraps up for her ride."

Will acquiesced gladly, not counting his own sacri-



[A RIVAL'S FACE.]

fice. He had always been accustomed to have his elder brother accept the lion's share of fortune's favours with patronizing condescension. He would have given he knew not what for the two or three hours' ride with Janie, while his brother accepted the boon with a sort of insolent philosophy. At least he seemed so. But Dr. Gabriel Carlyne was not always what he seemed.

For the first time since his arrival he unbent to his old manner as he and Janie sped out of sight of the farmhouse, along the smooth road, amid the flying crystals which glittered in the frosty air.

"I believe I have not had a genuine ride like this, Janie, since my student days, when I used to come home and drive you on one errand and another, as I am doing to-day. You were not so dignified in those days as you are now."

"Am I dignified? It must be your own reflection that you see in me."

"Well, perhaps. We are both changed, no doubt. You were not a young lady in those days."

"I am not a lady now. I am the girl your mother adopted from the poorhouse. I did not suppose I should have to remind you of that," she answered, in a kind of passion.

"Why, Janie, how bitter you are! What ails you, child? Of course you have no need to remind me of anything concerning yourself. I think too much about you, unfortunately, to forget any fact of your life, or point of your character, or feature of your beauty."

"What do you mean by 'unfortunately'?"

He had been wont to make a half-way sort of love to her in those student days he referred to, and it was easy, now that his voice and face had softened, to return to the strain.

"What do I mean?" he repeated, in a melancholy sort of tone. "Well, Janie, I mean 'unfortunately.' It is unfortunate for me to think so much of you as I do—as I have done for a year past, because it makes me unhappy."

"I really don't see why it should make you unhappy. Or, if it does, why you should go on thinking of me."

"What if I could not help it?"

She raised her clear, beautiful eyes, partly with real astonishment, partly in coquetry.

Was Gabriel Carlyne telling her that he could not help thinking about her? Then they had one bond of sympathy, since she could not help thinking of him. Probably her eyes told him so, and then, as if conscious of the confession, drooped in shame, the long lashes fringing the flushed cheeks.

The blood rushed through Gabriel Carlyne's veins. Was he a villain, he asked himself, or an idiot? And what had he done? Blundered into a betrayal of a passion he had concealed almost from his own heart? A passion which, cost what it might, must never see the light of day—a passion which was the one weakness of his strong nature? Had he done this?

"Janie, I ought never to have said what I have," he spoke, at last, gravely, but half-tenderly.

She turned deadly pale.

"We can forget that you have done so," she rejoined, in a colder tone.

"Brave little heart! Oh, child, we must forget. We must!"

There was no chance of moving away from him. He was gazing into her face with no longer a mask upon his own. The long white road stretched before them. The ponies flew swiftly on. In the clear radiance of the winter daylight there could be no mistake as to the meaning of the look he poured into her face. There was a moment's silence. Then he repeated, hoarsely:

"We must forget, Janie; yet we shall not. The memory of what has been spoken will last into eternity."

His eyes glung clongingly to her face. His head bent. She felt his brown beard sweep across her face, his lips pressed softly to her forehead.

"Gabriel," she cried out, shrinking away, "how dare you be so cruel, so—unmanly?"

"It is true, I am both. Hate me because I am. It is no excuse that I love you madly—no excuse at all. But I have loved you, Janie—how little I ever meant to say so—but I have ever since those student days when you were a wild girl of fourteen, and I not old and base enough to have found out how a man must starve and chill his better nature if he means to succeed."

"Why do you talk of it?" she asked, feebly.

She had not foreseen this crisis. It had been enough to have worshipped an ideal Gabriel, to dimly imagine she was worshipped in return. But thus to have it put into words, to be wooed and refused in a breath!

"Why did you not let Will bring me this morning?" she faltered.

"Why?" cried Gabriel, savagely. "Because he would have used the opportunity, as I have done, to tell you that he loves you madly. But with this difference—that, like an honourable man, he would have asked you to marry him at the end of his declaration. And I am coward and mean enough to thwart him in getting you if I can."

She shook her head.

"I think you are mistaken about Will. I shall never marry anybody. My unknown birth would disgrace them. I wish they had let me die."

Dr. Carlyne dared not trust himself to talk more. It was too delicious and too dangerous.

He lashed the ponies, and they flew onward in silence.

Janie nerved herself to give her invitations easily at their different stopping-places, as a proud, insulted woman can. The list was completed at last. But Gabriel turned his horses' heads then toward the nearest town, instead of toward the farm.

"Where are you going?" Janie asked, spurred into some indefinite fear.

"Janie, I shall return home to town to-night. It will be necessary for me to satisfy mother with some excuse. I am going to the telegraph office to manufacture a despatch."

She made no remonstrance. She knew it was better for him to go.

When they reached the farm at two in the afternoon they found Mrs. Carlyne, in a fever of anxiety, divided between her despair at giving Gabriel a spoiled dinner and disappointment at the contents of a telegram which summoned him instantly back to town. There was no time to lose. He must eat his dinner, spoiled as it was, and return at once to catch the four o'clock train.

"Janie, dear, won't you run up and pack his valise?" asked the mother, "while I remain with him for the few moments which are left?"

Janie obeyed mechanically. She returned Gabriel's toilet appurtenances to their places, remarking the nicety and fineness of all his little luxuries even then. And, turning some articles to make room for another, she dislodged a miniature case, a dainty thing of ivory and filagree, which instinct told her must hold a woman's face—the face of her rival! Without pausing to consider, she unclasped it. A woman's face, indeed; of a certain proud beauty; not quite a fresh face, nor a loving one. But a slip of paper lay across the velvet, on which was written: "Lost in one short week you forget Sylvia," and a date—that of the day previous. The miniature had evidently been sent him just as he was leaving home for this visit so abruptly concluded. Janie glared at it. But for this his love might have been sufficient to have overlooked the mystery of her origin.

The tramp of the horse which was being brought round to the door to take Gabriel away aroused her. She clasped the covers of the miniature. As she did so a sign or figure upon the gold plate of the cover caught her eye. It was Sylvia's coat of arms. Janie understood nothing of its nature, but all the same her eyes remained glued to it; the shield, the rampant lion. It was as if some sign in the heavens had been revealed to her.

The figure, or whatever it might be, was also in her possession, engraved upon the little silver teaspoon from which the woman who had brought her to the poorhouse had fed her, and which was the sole article of sufficient value to be retained when, after this woman's death, Mrs. Carlyne had taken the miserable infant into her heart and home. This spoon Janie kept; a superstitious charm had always invested it in her eyes as the one thing which was her own. It was laid away in a box which Gabriel had given her filled with candies, years ago. With the speed of thought she flew to her own room with the miniature in her hand, opened the box, drew forth the spoon, and held it beside the miniature. The figures, for which Janie had no interpretation or name, were identical.

While she stood there lost in conjecture, in crazing, bewildered fancies, she heard Gabriel come to his

room. She started forward to restore the miniature. But what explanation should she give? While she tried to collect her thoughts he was closing the valise. He would believe she had left the room to avoid him. He hurried away, down the stairs. She was left with Sylvia's gift in her hands.

"There, you haven't bade Janie good-bye," she heard his mother saying from the door. "You'll meet Will, I think. He went after the second load of greens. I declare, it is too bad to have your visit cut short in this way." And then Gabriel's low rejoinder, and the father's, "Well, well, he'll have to come again to make it up," and he was gone.

Janie had a genuine headache that New Year's Eve, but she worked bravely, with Will, at the over-green wreaths, which were to festoon the walls for the party next night.

Mrs. Carlyne partly forgot her chagrin in her hospitable labours during the day. Hams were boiled and chickens roasted, pies baked and huge cakes frosted. And while it all went on the mother reflected that perhaps they would do just as well without the presence of the elder son, of whom she was so proud and at heart so afraid.

Will was in gay spirits. He, too, was more at ease away from Gabriel. If he noticed Janie's depression, he attributed it to her long ride in the cold, and the consequent headache. She was very lovely in his eyes in the blue dress she put on for the party. He decided that the evening should not close without his making known to her his attachment.

Poor Janie, she little dreamed of this added affliction in store! She was trying to get through bravely; to dance and chat and serve at supper, only longing for the time to come when she could be alone and think. Fortune seemed to favour her. She was kept too busy for Will to tell his tale, but when the last guest had departed Mrs. Carlyne said:

"You and Janie must see to the lights and the fires, for I cannot stand another minute." And so they were left alone.

"Janie," said the young man, abruptly, "I am thankful to have you for a moment to myself—the first since I came home."

"Is it, Will? And now we are both too tired to talk."

"I am not tired, Janie—I cannot rest till I have told you what is on my mind; something of my own affairs first. I am prospering, Janie; growing rich. You are glad Janie? I know it. I want you to enjoy knowing it, because it is all for your sake that I am working. I love you, Janie. I must say the words. I love you profoundly and tenderly. You must know that I do, but still I want to tell you plainly. It makes me so happy to do so. Can you love me, dear, in return, and will you be my wife?"

It was manly wooing, which might have won her—but for that other.

"Oh, Will, why have you said this?"

She shrank away, putting up her hands in deprecation.

"Take it back, dear Will; it can never be. I will never marry; never disgrace any good man by the mystery of my birth."

"Your birth or parentage are nothing to me, Janie. It is yourself I want."

She shook her head sadly.

"You cannot love me then, Janie. You cannot love me?"

"No—no—dear Will, I shall never love in that way, never."

She little knew the pain she gave. She might have guessed it by her own, but she did not.

Will was too miserable to be merciful. His love for Janie had grown with his growth. He had never dreamed of its absolute repulse.

They put out the lights and fastened the doors this New Year's night, feeling equally that destiny had been hard upon them.

Gabriel might disguise his betrayal, and manufacture an excuse for his departure, but Will could not. Before noon the following day his mother knew that he had proposed and been rejected.

Mrs. Carlyne was a just woman, and fond, too, of the girl she had adopted; but there was a bitter rankle in her heart at the news, which would vent itself upon Janie despite her own efforts.

"I shall have to go back, mother," Will said. "My staying makes it too hard for all."

And so the two visits were shortened. The New Year set in with wild storms, and a dull ache throbbled in two women's breasts as they lived side by side, more silent, less helpful than ever in their two lives before.

So a month passed—a leaden, dreary, desolate month. And then one gray, windy morning Mrs. Carlyne found herself strangely alone in the candle-lit kitchen at six o'clock, where never before had Janie failed to appear to assist her in preparing the breakfast.

She did not go at once to see what had become of

the girl. Doubtless she had a headache, or a cold, or something trivial, and Mrs. Carlyne did not feel towards her in her motherly wont.

But when breakfast was finally ready she went to Janie's chamber, to find it empty.

Janie had run away!

The mother stared at her, disbelieving her own eyes at first.

Her old fondness and all-forgiveness came back to her when it was too late.

She returned to her husband with the news, and fell in a fainting fit on the floor.

Janie had left no sign. She had taken none of her best clothes, none of the trinkets which the boys had given her from time to time; only the fancy paper-box, the miniature, the spoon. And, in her everyday clothes, with her total inexperience, her perilous beauty, she had run away from her home, out into the world. Alas, Janie!

But Janie was safe in the singleness of her purpose. She had gone in search of her birthright and Gabriel Carlyne's love. She had a little money. She knew how to work, and she was too ignorant to be afraid, and so she drifted on into the great city where Gabriel and Will both lived, conjecturing in only the dimmest way how the little silver spoon and the woman's picture were to furnish her with a clue to the mystery of her parentage.

She got work as saleswoman in a fancy shop. The proprietors knew the value of her good looks, and asked no references. She obtained board, also, paying in advance. These arrangements hardly cost her a moment's anxiety, for she was quite accustomed to consider all forms of ways and means.

The shop at whose counter she stood was a fashionable resort. Day by day hundreds of women, of the class to which she imagined "Sylvia" to belong, went and came, selecting and matching and comparing their flosses and beads.

Janie watched them all with a careworn sort of anxiety. It seemed to her that some time or other the original of the picture must come, among the others. And then? What did Janie expect to do then? She hardly foresaw. But she would do something, that was sure—something.

The loneliness of her life was appalling. Once, when the long spring twilights came, instead of going to her home to tea, when the shop was closed, she started upon a long walk—for the street which held Gabriel Carlyne's house.

She did not think of entering, of course, but it was possible, just possible, that she might see him enter or depart, or the outline of his shadow through an unclosed blind. Her heart beat hard as she read the numbers upon the houses, and found herself in his vicinity.

At length she perceived his office. It was upon the ground floor; the windows were partially un-screened, and she could look within. The gas burned brightly.

She perceived two or three persons within. She advanced cautiously; at that instant a heavy tread startled her, and she saw a policeman passing, eyeing her rather curiously. There was a stir also within the house.

Janie started onward, turned the first corner, and fled as fast as she dare.

Another time she bought a pair of shoes which were wrapped in an old daily paper. Chancing to glance at its contents, she read the following advertisement:

"Lost. On the 31st of December, a lady's miniature in a valuable case. The finder will be liberally rewarded."

That she knew must mean Sylvia's picture. Gabriel, then, was unaware that she was the thief. He supposed himself to have lost it in the city: had forgotten, no doubt, placing it in his valise. How would he feel when it never came back? What would he say to Sylvia about its loss? And poor Janie's beautiful blue eyes shone with hot anger to remember how Gabriel had loved and spurned her.

Is a fixed desire a magnet which at last draws the wished-for object to itself? Sometimes it would seem so. It seemed so to Janie, when one day, a wild, wet, late November day, after months of watching, she saw, from the shop window—it is hard to tell just what the real thing was which Janie saw; it was to her a revelation.

The day was so wet there were no customers in the shop, and she stood gazing idly at the scudding rain, through the great plate-glass window.

By-and-bye a carriage drove rapidly up to the kerbstone, and an elderly lady descended and entered the adjoining shop. She stopped but a moment. Janie noticed the rich, thick texture of her dress as she came back and lifted it, stepping into her carriage. Something else she noticed too: a panel upon the carriage door, and a shield, and a lion rampant.

The coachman bent his head for the directions, and gathered up the reins.

At that instant Janie dashed wildly from the shop door, out bareheaded into the rain, which soaked her instantly, on and after the carriage with flying steps. The distance was increasing between them, when a tangle of vehicles caused a brief halt.

Janie dashed into the midst of wheels and trampling feet, lifted her hand imploringly towards the driver to attract his attention. He did not see her; nor she an approaching cart. Either she slipped on the wet pavement or was knocked down. A moment later the coachman was pulling his horses to their haunches to save her from instant death, as she fell under their feet.

There were some brief, senseless seconds of confusion. Then the mistress of the carriage was standing herself in the muddy street in the pouring rain, directing the placing of the hurt girl in her carriage. She had swooned, and no one could give any account of her. She must be insane, was the verdict. Mrs. Middleton closed the carriage door, and ordered the man to drive home.

A sharp pain in her wrist brought Janie to her senses.

She looked around and asked:

"Is this your carriage?"

"Yes, my dear."

"I believe I have spoiled your dress. And this is your coat-of-arms upon the door?"

"Certainly."

Mrs. Middleton began to suspect herself of the rescue of a crazy person.

"Please take me home. I want to see you. That was why I ran after the carriage."

Janie told her the address, and with some wonderment Mrs. Middleton altered her destination.

"Will you come to my room?" Janie asked, when they had reached her home.

"Certainly, if you have business with me."

Janie's wrist was swelling rapidly, but she did not feel the pain. She opened her box and brought out the miniature, placing it wordlessly in Mrs. Middleton's hands.

"How did you come by this?" the lady asked, rather sharply.

"I will tell you presently. And this"—and she placed the little teaspoon in her visitor's hands.

"One of my spoons. I do not understand you. Where did you get these things? and who are you?"

At the latter's question she looked keenly into the girl's face. Her countenance changed as she did so.

"I do not know who I am," said Janie. "I was taken from the almshouse in infancy, adopted and brought up in the country. This spoon was my only property, the only link which gave me a history. Chance gave into my hands this case bearing the same marks. Intense anxiety as to my parentage caused me, with these slight links, to come to the city, to devote myself to searching for some further clue."

Mrs. Middleton's eyes had never left the speaker's face.

"Great Heaven!" she exclaimed at last, "can it be my lost child? Speak, girl! What else do you know of yourself? Your voice, your face—but yet you may be playing a part to deceive me. Did you know that I had lost a child?"

"I knew nothing," said Janie, wearily, "but the coincidence of this coat-of-arms."

"My dear girl, my heart yearns towards you. But I must not be rash or weak. Who are your friends? I must write at once. There may have been some clothing retained. Meanwhile you must come home with me."

Janie declined this. She would await developments where she was. She feared there were no clothes: she had never heard of any. But there might be; for the spoon had not been preserved as any clue to her friends; it was never expected she would seek or find.

While anxiously awaiting a response from Mrs. Carlyne Janie learned the particulars of Mrs. Middleton's last child.

She had been left by the nurse a moment, sitting in her carriage in the park. Upon the return of the girl the carriage was empty. Probably she was gone longer than she admitted, for the offer of reward and the most diligent search had failed year after year to bring the lost one back. There was no birthmark, said Mrs. Middleton, but a mole upon the shoulder-blade.

Janie could offer that much proof, but was it enough? The spoon might have fallen into any one's possession. The mole upon the shoulder was a common mark.

Mrs. Middleton did not dare dwell upon the girl's resemblance to her husband, now dead. Mr. Middleton had been a rarely handsome man. Sylvia, the elder daughter, was dark, like the mother. The

lost baby had been very brilliant and fair, like the father.

Quickly came Mrs. Carlyne's answer. She had to dwell upon her own gratitude at the news; her own relief. She had to remind Mrs. Middleton of her sufferings in losing her daughter, and then she proceeded to explain that the garments which the baby wore when brought to the almshouse had been carefully preserved.

They were of fine texture, the linen wrought with a coat-of-arms like that upon the spoon. The cloak, too, was in Mrs. Carlyne's possession, stained and torn, but might easily be recognized. The woman who had died in the almshouse was a half-witted creature, who claimed the baby as her own, though her story was not generally believed.

Mrs. Middleton went at once to the Carlyne Farm. She examined the clothing, so precious in every thread, and fully identified it. She embraced Mrs. Carlyne fondly, and assured her she should never forget her claim upon the lost child.

"My claim would have been even greater than it is," said Mrs. Carlyne, smiling, "if Janie had not rejected both my sons."

Mrs. Middleton started slightly, without reply. She was aware now that one of Mrs. Carlyne's sons was her elder daughter's lover.

"Gabriel," continued the mother, "has suffered most of all. After Janie was lost he told me for the first time how they each knew of the other's love, but how he had said they must forget all because he was too ambitious to marry a girl out of the almshouse."

Mrs. Middleton's fine-out lips curled. Her hostess knew not that she was on dangerous ground.

When the New Year again came round there was a grand party at Mrs. Middleton's mansion in honour of the long-lost daughter.

Sylvia and Janie stood together when Dr. Carlyne entered. He had not seen Janie since the preceding New Year. Her loveliness dazzled him, but he did not approach her. The two girls each turned slightly pale.

"You love him still, Sylvia?" as their eyes met.

"I have ceased to. He never loved me. You alone have a claim to him."

"None that I recognize. I was not good enough for him once; I am too good now."

"Do him justice, dear Janie. His mother will tell you how, in his grief over your loss, he besought Providence for the chance to undo the wrong he had done. He swore, let him find you as he might, to beseech you to marry him. And he confided all to me, and broke his engagement with me, to devote himself to searching for you."

Dr. Carlyne seemed to divine that his cause was being pleaded for him; for just then he approached the sisters.

He looked grave and anxious, self-respectful but imploring, with something of the tenderness in his eyes of that morning ride. He approached, and bowed without speaking.

"Gabriel," said Janie, softly.

"Janie."

Sylvia slipped away, and left them together. Generous to the last degree, she was consoled by the thought that her miniature, and thus herself, was the cause of bringing them together.

And so they entered upon another new year.

A. T.

A LEGEND OF THE IRON MASK.

DURING the seventeen years' confinement of this strange prisoner at Sainte Marguerite, St. Mars, who brought him to the fortress, was replaced by a Monsieur De Bonpart, as governor. The daughter of the latter, just emerging from childhood to womanhood, grew up with this mystery around her. She had seen the graceful figure of the masked prisoner promenading at night upon the terrace and at worship in the chapel, where he was forbidden to speak or uncover his face, the soldiers in attendance having their pieces always pointed towards him if he should do either.

She discovered that her father always treated him with the greatest respect, serving him bareheaded and standing. His table service was of massive silver, his dress of the richest velvet; he wore the finest linen and the most costly lace. She had heard her father accidentally speak of him as "the Prince." No wonder that his sad fate occupied her thoughts by day and his noble figure haunted her dreams by night. She, too, was very young and beautiful, and their eyes occasionally met in chapel. He sang beautifully, and was a very skilful performer on the guitar. It is said she climbed the rocks under the castle terrace, and sang sweet songs to the poor captive. Thus a romantic love sprang up between them, and as it gained strength the young girl dared to purloin the keys from her father, and so obtained access to the prisoner.

When the governor discovered his child's treachery he was struck with the greatest dismay. His oath was binding upon him to put immediately to death any one who had spoken to the prisoner. But she confessed her love for him, and pleaded pitifully for her young life. The captive, also, to whom the governor was much attached, joined his prayers to hers, and implored that they might be made man and wife, and then the secret would be safe. The governor was not stern enough to immolate his child, and perhaps a gleam of ambition may have flashed across his mind, as, in the event of the death of Louis XIV., the prisoner would be acknowledged and his daughter sit on the throne of France. However, their supplicants were performed by the priest of the castle in the dead of night, and all were sworn to secrecy. From this union two children were born.

A whisper of this reaching the ears of the Minister, the Marquis of Louvois, the prisoner was immediately removed to the Bastille for safe keeping; and the mother, the priest, and governor disappeared. The children were sent to Corsica, to be brought up in obscurity under the name of their grandfather, Bonpart, which was corrupted into Buonaparte. And thus, says the legend, Providence avenged the wrongs of the twin-brother of Louis XIV. and restored the oldest branch of the Bourbon line to the throne of France.

FACETIE.

LATEST FROM PARIS.—What is the difference between the Lord Mayor and a pugilist?—One paid for his box and the other boxed for his pay.—*Fun.*

BEARLY UNDESIRABLE.—A bucolic acquaintance who seems to know more about ploughshares than railway obligations says he means to name his early peas Great Westons—because, forsooth, he expects them to be a good "bearing" stock.—*Fun.*

TRAVELLING IN EUROPE.
Robinson: "Why, confound it, here's a snail in the sand! agh!"

Johnson: "Sh, sh, don't say anything—they'll charge us for it if they find it out!"

DISCREPANCY.
Young Lady (who has missed "The Moon"): "Do you know where the bounds are, Robinson?"

Old Keeper (compassionately): "Y'are just too late, miss—the gentlemen be all gone!"—*Punch.*

PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY.
Jenkins (very short): "Well, for my part, I never heard a tall man say anything funny in my life."

Jones (very tall): "Ah, that's because you believe 'brevity's the soul of wit.'"—*Fun.*

A NATURAL INTERPRETATION.
Sunday School Teacher: "What do we understand by 'Suffering for righteousness' sake?"

Boy (promptly): "Practising hymns in the morning, teacher, and Sunday School in the afternoon, and bible-class in the evening!"

DIAGNOSIS.
"I can tell you what you're suffering from, my good fellow! You're suffering from acne!"

"Ackney? Why, that's just what the doctor medical gent he told me! I only wish I'd never been near the place!"—*Punch.*

A DIFFICULT QUEST.—An elderly clergyman, who is a bachelor, and rather good-looking, on being asked why he had never married, replied that he had been looking all his life for a woman who would refrain from working him a pair of slippers, and had not yet been able to find her.

NOT IF HE KNOWS IT!
First Old Government Clerk: "You want a holiday, why don't you go now, when there's so little to do?"

Second O. G. C. (a little older): "No! no! Not if I know it. I want to go when there's plenty to do!"

THE LOST TEA.—As a train from Aberdeen had nearly reached the next station the other day an old lady suddenly shouted out: "Stop this carriage—stop her!" A passenger wanted to know what was the matter, and the old woman excitedly exclaimed: "Where's the man who looks after the carriage? I've left a quart bottle of cold tea at Aberdeen!"

BUSINESS!
Jeweller: "No! I wouldn't recommend this cheap watch. Not so much because it's a poor time-keeper, for that, in a lady's watch, don't matter so much—but there is so little gold in the case that you would be ashamed of yourself if your pocket were picked!"

AN AWKWARD OBSTACLE.—A stern father got wind of an intended elopement of his daughter on a certain night, and when that sweet thing was on the point of stealing downstairs she beheld a very fierce-looking bull-dog standing at the bottom; so she concluded to go back to her own room and postpone her elopement. Her father never told her that it

was a stuffed dog, which he had borrowed from the man living next door.

THE MANLY MOVEMENT.

Young Lady: "Are you a good runner, Mr. Dull-boy?"

Mr. Dullboy: "Well, not very first-rate. I was once in a mile race, and they gave me three-quarters of the distance, start, but I—aw—I didn't win."—*Judy.*

A CURIOUS CERTIFICATE.—In hearing a case at one of the London police-courts, in which a man was charged with assaulting his wife, the following was read as the defence:—"I here certify that T—F—Has been in my Emphyment 100 cayers and All ways found him to be a quiet man and most otintif to his work. (Signed —, bricklayer.)"

A GOOD PART.

Leading Lady: "Oh, Mr. Inking, have you a good part for me in the new play?"

Dramatic Author: "I should think so, indeed, my dear; there's seven changes of dress in the course of the piece."

Leading Lady: "Beautiful! then I shall make a hit in it—I know I shall!"

GRAND-TOUR.

Mary: "Please, m'm, is it true as you're a-goin' to buy a grand piano?" Will it be a real grand like they 'as at the 'all?"

Mistress: "Well, yes, Mary; I believe so, but—why?"

Mary: "You see, m'm, cos when you went out I could play it to keep the children quiet."—*Fun.*

A RARA AVIS.

Jones: "Who is that girl all the men seem so anxious to be introduced to?"

Brown: "Oh, that's Miss Pynke. Wonderful woman, sir!"

Jones: "What has she done?"

Brown: "Never written a novel, or contributed to a magazine!"—*Punch.*

A WITTY AUCTIONEER.—A witty and popular auctioneer was selling some valuable pictures, among which was that of an old baronial residence, when a forward, well-known buyer, with plenty of cash, pooh-poohed the picture, adding, "I assure you it is not a bit like the place." The auctioneer, with great presence of mind, replied, "Ah, sir, your opinion is of very little consequence. I don't think you have seen this view of it, as you entered by the back door, very likely."

TALLEYRAND REDIVIVUS.

Epique (dining at his club, is surprised at the presence of his domestic green-grocer waiter): "Eh! what! Why, is it you, Warts? Well, I'm glad to see you're getting on!"

Warts (unmoved): "Thank you, sir, yessir, wick I've 'eard say 'the man as can wait is the successful man,' sir. Siltion or Oleshire, sir?"

(Becomes a licensed victualler and dies rich).—*Punch.*

INQUISITIVE.

Children are inquisitive bodies. For instance:

"What does 'cleave' mean, papa?"

"It means to unite together."

"Does John unite wood when he cleaves it?"

"Hem! well, it means to separate."

"Pa, does a man separate from his wife when he cleaves to her?"

"Hem! hem! Don't ask so many foolish questions, child."

HARD ON JONES.—Jones has been doing homage to a pair of bright eyes, and talking tender things by moonlight. A few evenings since Jones resolved to "make his destiny secure." Accordingly he fell on his knees before the fair Dalcines and made his passion known. She refused him flat. Jumping to his feet, he informed her, in choice terms, that there were as good fish in the sea as ever were caught. Judge of the exasperation of our worthy swain when she coolly replied, "Yes, but they don't bite at toads!" Jones has learned a lesson.

CONSENTIOUS TO A FAULT.

Native of those parts to stout Commercial Person (to whom it is a life-and-death matter that he should catch the train seen in the distance), very deliberately, indeed, and between mouthfuls of bread and cheese: "Well, sir, I can't rightly say which is the shortest out, I'm sure, for you see both roads leads to it, as it were, and some says one is the nighest, and some says the other is nighest still; I myself says one's half as far again as t'other; but then, bless you! that's only my opinion, you see, and Heaven forbid I should mislead you when you're in a hurry!"—*Judy.*

JURYMEN'S JUSTICE.—At Hertford, the other day, two men were tried for night poaching and assaulting a gamekeeper. The intelligent juryman, after hearing the evidence, and deliberating for a considerable time on the summing-up, which dwelt on the conflicting testimony of several witnesses, stated that "they found the prisoners guilty, but highly recom-

mended them to mercy, because there might be some question as to their identity." The argument that prisoners are entitled to the benefit of the doubt is, under such eminently admirable circumstances, fast passing away—so far as poor and obscure prisoners are concerned. In this case the only benefit of the doubt was a sentence of four months each. There is a certainty about that which more than compensates for any small thing in the way of doubt as to innocence or guilt, identity or the want of it.—*Fwn.*

CRUEL!

Smith (usually a shy, reserved, and silent man) tells a rather long but otherwise entertaining story about an orange, which meets with great success.

Brown (when the laughter and applause have subsided): "Bravo, Smith! Capital, old man! But, I say, you told it better one night at Jones's, a few months ago!"

Jones: "No, no! Where he told it best was that morning we breakfasted with you, Brown, somewhere about the beginning of the year before last!"

Robinson: "Ah, but don't you recollect the way he told it after that supper I gave you fellows at Evans's in 'fifty-one'? How we did laugh, to be sure!"—*Funch.*

AN ANCIENT CLERK.

LAW.—WANTED by a CLERK (with twenty years' experience), a permanent SITUATION. Advertiser is acquainted with Conveyancing, Accounts, Book-keeping, and the General Routine of a solicitor's office; also competent to conduct magisterial business in the occasional absence of the principal. Aged ninety-three, married; salary moderate.—*Law Times.*

This venerable gentleman must have discovered the Elixir of Life, and in the most unlikely place for it—an attorney's office! At ninety-three he still seeks a permanent situation! He ought, certainly, to be an authority on "long leases" and "life interests." But of all the undesirable "tenancies for life" we should have imagined a managing clerk's stool in an attorney's office about the most untempting. The application is all the stranger as the applicant's experience of similar situations only extends over twenty of his ninety-three years, so that he must have been sixty-three when he began office-work. Perhaps his sense of right and wrong was already too strong to be shaken, or his sensibilities were so blunted by age that he did not feel any conscience prick from the work he must have had to do.—*Funch.*

EVEN-TEMPERED.

The scandal-mongers will find no comfort in the following:

Old Farmer Pettigill went into the house one day and caught John, one of his men, hugging Mrs. P. The farmer said nothing, and went out into the field.

After dinner he wanted John for something, but John was not to be found. He went into John's room, where the latter was on his knees packing his trunk.

"What's the matter, John?" said P.

"Oh, nothing," said John.

"What are you packing your trunk for?"

"I'm going away."

"Going away! What are you going away for?"

"You know," answered John.

"I know?"

"Yes, you understand."

"No, I don't know," answered P. "Come give the reason of your sudden desire to go away."

"Well," meekly answered John, "you saw what I was doing this morning."

"Oh, please!" laughed Pettigill, "do not be foolish. If you and me can't hug the old woman enough, I'll hire another man."

GIRLS AND HATS.

"Any colour so it's red," is what the girls say when they walk into a milliner's shop to select trimmings for their hats. And such hats! Nobby, do you say? Well, they are. The trim turned down on one side, regular slouch, and turned up on the other and pinned fast, just like one of the "Boys what runs wild der mashen, my name's Mose; Sykesky, git out of dem hose, will ye?" Black or stone-coloured hats and the everlasting scarlet rose on one side. A saucy, black-eyed girl sailing up the street with such a head-gear looks piratical, and even the mild-looking girls gain (?) a pert "get out of the way, the engine's coming" sort of a threatening appearance as they pass along with their latest styles. And it's getting worse and worse of it all the time. Why, sometimes you see a plain black hat a foot high with rim enough to make a deer-mat flapping on one side, and enough more strapped up with guy lines and hog-chains on the other side to make a pair of slippers for a girl (it takes two yards and a quarter full) and two large wufflowers dyed crimson nailed on the starboard quarter. It is a common sight now, in our fashionable thoroughfares, to see timid young men crowding around a policeman for protection as one of these fearfully fashion-

able females bears down towards them. It strikes terror to the stoutest heart.

FIGHTING IT OUT.

A story is told of a daughter of a prominent person which is peculiarly interesting and suggestive of unconscious wisdom. A gentleman was invited to this person's house to tea. Immediately on being seated at the table the little girl astonished the family circle and the guest by the abrupt question:

"Where is your wife?"

Now the gentleman, having been recently separated from the partner of his life, was taken so completely by surprise that he stammered forth the truth:

"I don't know."

"Don't know!" replied the enfant terrible. "Why don't you know?"

Finding that the child persisted in her interrogatories, despite the mild reproof of her parents, he concluded to make a clean breast of the matter, and have it over at once. So he said, with a calmness which was the result of inward expletives:

"Well, we don't live together; we think, as we can't agree, we'd better not."

He stifled a groan as the child began again, and darted an exasperated look at her parents. But the little torment would not be quieted until she exclaimed:

"Can't agree! Then why don't you fight it out, as pa and ma do?"

"Vengeance is mine," laughingly retorted the visitor, after "pa" and "ma" exchanged looks of holy horror, followed by the inevitable roar.

THE HEALING KISS.

THE hope of the house is in trouble,

His musical cries rend the air,

While his feet and his hands beat a tattoo—

Pet's bumped his poor head on the stair,

"Run quick for the camphor and linen;

Find out just the distance he fell!"

"No matter," roared out the young hero,

"For mother has kissed it 'most well."

Oh, magical kiss! we have felt it

Full many a time in our youth,

And there never was medicine like it,

Or ointment so precious forsooth.

The dew from the lips that had parted

To drop words of pity for pain

Seemed akin to the breath of an angel,

And never was tendered in vain.

We oftentimes wish for a solace

As trusty, as speedy, and sure,

When we rise from the shocks and the bruises

That mortals must ever endure;

When we battle with care and with sorrow,

With heartaches we never may tell;

Then we think of the time in the distance,

When mother's dear kiss made us well.

M. D. K.

GEMS.

MANY troubles, like waves of the ocean, will, if we wait calmly, only break at our feet and disappear.

PLEASURE is to a woman what the sun is to the flowers; if moderately enjoyed, it beautifies, it refreshes and it improves; if immoderately, it withers, it deteriorates and destroys.

MAN has two chambers in his heart; the one for himself, the other for a friend; but the latter had far better be empty than filled with that which is false.

To be free from desire is money, to be free from the rage of perpetually buying something new is a certain revenue, to be content with what we possess constitutes the greatest and most certain of riches.

You bring a green log and a candle together, and they are very safe neighbours; but bring a few shavings and set them alight, and then bring a few small sticks, and let them take fire, and the log be in the midst of them, and you will soon lose your log. And so it is with little sins, and so the Evil One brings you a little temptation and leaves you to indulge yourself. "There is no great harm in this," "No great peril in that," and so, by these little chips, we are first easily lighted up, and at last the green log is burned.

THE SMALLEST CHURCH IN ENGLAND.—Chilbone church, on the borders of Exmoor, near the shore of Porlock Bay, is a perfect little Norman building. The chancel is 10 ft. wide, by 11 ft. 3 in. long; the wall of the chancel arch is 2 ft. thick; the length of the nave is 21 ft. 6 in. in the clear; 12 ft. 3 in. wide. Total length, 34 ft. 9 in. A porch on the south side

is 6 ft. by 4 ft. There is a western bell-turret, closed up, containing two unlettered bells.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

TO CLEAN BLACK GLOVES.—A good way to clean black kid gloves that are soiled, turned white and otherwise injured, is to take a teaspoonful of salad oil, drop a few drops of ink in it, and rub it over the gloves with the tip of a feather; then let them dry in the sun. Black kid boots and slippers can be restored to their original gloss by this method.

CELERY SAUCE.—Cut up a large bunch of celery into small pieces, use only that which is blanched. Put it into a pint of water and boil until it is tender; then add a teaspoonful of flour and a lump of butter the size of an egg, mixed well together; season with salt and pepper, and stir constantly until taken from the fire. It is very nice with boiled poultry.

STATISTICS.

THE HARVEST IN SWEDEN.—Sweden produced, during the year 1874, 735,000 Swedish tons of wheat, 4,226,000 tons of rye, 2,559,000 tons of barley, 6,636,000 tons of oats, and 915,000 tons of oats and barley mixed, or, altogether, a little over 15,000,000 tons of corn; besides 11,600,000 tons of potatoes. These figures exceed those of 1872 by 140,000 tons of wheat, 360,000 tons of rye, and 1,500,000 tons of potatoes; whereas they are inferior to those of 1872 by 495,000 tons of barley, 1,123,000 tons of oats. The Swedish ton is equal to about 4 1-8th English bushels.

THE CITY OF LONDON COURT.—The judicial statistics for this court have been made up for the past year, and exhibit a continual increase in the amount of business done. The total amounts sued for were: In 1872, 60,751*l.*; in 1873, 62,584*l.*; in 1874, 68,166*l.* This is altogether exclusive of issues sent down for trial from the superior courts, which in the past year were nineteen in number, representing claims to the amount of 684*l.* The total fees, rejecting shillings and pence, levied were:—For 1872, 7,128*l.*; 1873, 7,284*l.*; 1874, 7,472*l.* The statistics of the Admiralty jurisdiction exhibit a still greater increase. The causes entered were:—In 1872, 151; in 1873, 186; in 1874, 300. The amounts claimed were: In 1872, 12,159*l.*; in 1873, 15,958*l.*; in 1874, 29,278*l.* And the fees levied in respect thereof amounted to:—In 1872, 531*l.*; in 1873, 491*l.*; in 1874, 954*l.*

MISCELLANEOUS.

It has recently been shown by M. Baffon that the leaves of plants are capable of absorbing water.

The number of patents applied for during the year ending December 31, 1874, was 4,492, which is an increase of 188 on the previous year (4,304).

It is reported in Paris that King Alfonso is already betrothed to his first cousin, the daughter of the Duc de Montpensier.

THE QUEEN has granted a pension of 50*l.* a year to the widow of Giovanni Battista Falciuri, the faithful servant of Lord Byron.

NAPOLEON III.—The committee on the liquidation of Napoleon III's civil list proposes to give his heirs 4,000,000 francs; the State retaining the museums of Pierrefonds and Fontainebleau, and the pictures and works of art.

THE CROWN DIAMONDS OF FRANCE.—The Crown diamonds of France, which at the commencement of the Franco-German war were sent to a military ocean port; have come back to Paris, and have been delivered to the Administration of the Public Domain.

THE GERMAN ARMY.—We gather from official statements that in 1876 Germany will be able to bring into the field at any point of her frontier, on twelve days' notice, no less than sixteen complete corps d'armée of 40,000 men each, armed with the latest perfected weapons. How will it feed them for a month at a distance from great city supplies?

THE LONDON ADDRESS OF CONGRATULATION TO THE EMPEROR OF RUSSIA.—The golden casket in which the address of congratulation presented by the citizens of London to the Emperor of Russia is to be sent to St. Petersburg is in course of completion. The principal feature of the casket is a beautiful miniature painting representing the delivery of the address, executed by a lady at Geneva, Mdlle. J. Tibert. Although the plate of gold on which the scene is enamelled is only 2 1/2 in. by 4 1/2 in., the portraits of the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, the Lord Mayor, and the other illustrious personages present are excellent, and the whole scene becomes brilliant under the power of a magnifying-glass.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

PHILIP N.—We are sorry to place any obstacle, in the shape of negation, in the way of your most laudably industrious applications, but there seems no help for it. To give, even to industry, the wrong sort of reward would be cruel, for we seriously think it advisable that you should postpone your matrimonial intentions for a few years.

CIVIL SERVICE.—There is something dependent on the age of an aspirant for employment in the Civil Service. As your letter is silent upon that point perhaps the best thing we can tell you to do is to make a personal application for employment at the office of the Civil Service Commissioners, Cannon Row, Westminster. Face your difficulty in this practical, self-reliant way; it will do you more good than heaps of correspondence.

L. E.—In the case you put, provided the father avoided committing an assault he would not be amenable to the law for refusing to give the son the shelter of his house. Broadly stated, the common law does not recognize the obligation of a father to provide for his offspring. The father is only liable when the son becomes chargeable to the parish. Then the parish authorities proceed under statute, and have to prove, amongst other things, the father's ability to contribute.

F. C.—It always puzzles us to hear that a young unmarried lady under age has a considerable income at her own disposal. Such incomes are usually placed in the hands of trustees until the lady attains her twenty-first year or marries, whichever event may first happen. The statements in your letter are of course supposed by you to be correct, but under the circumstances it is only natural that they would, if necessary, be made subject of some inquiry.

J. B. S.—The story of your horrible dream is not without interest and is very fairly told. The conundrum is also good. Observe that in relation to neither do we use the superlative degree. We can say nothing about the remuneration an author unknown to fame is likely to obtain for a story he is about to commence. A probable purchaser would doubtless like to see the completed manuscript before announcing his decision on the subject.

MARY.—Hair dyes are not to be recommended, for many reasons. Sometimes, through permeating the skin, they injure the general health of the user; they are not favourable to cleanliness, and they always interfere with the symmetry with which nature has invested us. You may change the colour of the hair, but you cannot alter the expression of the face nor the colour of the eye. By the use of your specific you may expect to improve nature, but you will find that you only replace her harmonious whole by some jarring discord, and spoil a beauty which is not wanting in the plainest appearance so long as it is allowed to be free from artificial contrivances.

ARNIE L. L.—In all probability you will find a visit to the dyer and scourer the least expensive way of accomplishing your object. It is usual to advertise for missing friends in those newspapers which circulate in the locality where the friends were last heard of. Do not be anxious about the blush; it is nature's handmaid to express emotions of pleasure or pain. It will only be overcome when long contact with the world has given you imperturbable self-possession, except only during some very few moments of retirement and reflection, when you may sigh for the happy days that are no more. 4. Your handwriting and the style of your letter are tolerably good.

JOE THE SOLDIER.—Although the lady has expressed her preference for "the military" generally she certainly did not mean to say that any member of a regiment would necessarily be an embodiment of her beau ideal. The opera-bouffe entitled "La Grande Duchesse" is an authority and a precedent in such a case, and shows that while a lady may love one member of your profession very devotedly she is able emphatically to reject other individuals of the same profession. Now the fault of your letter is its indefiniteness. You simply say you are a soldier. Whether you are a soldier whom a lady would care for or whether you are one whom she would treat with disdain it is impossible for us to say.

HIBERNIA.—Your application is tinged with a slight inconsistency. Having informed us of your extreme youth you state that you are not in good circumstances, a state of things as harmless as it is natural and comprehensible. Why then, in the name of all that is rational, do you conclude with that chivalrous announcement, "Money no object"? Further, you consider your prospects good because you expect to take your degree in about two years hence. Has it not occurred to you that a practice does not necessarily follow a qualification, and that it will not be very kind of you deliberately to set about winning a girl's affections while the prospects of a home are somewhat shabby?

FAIRY.—1. The handwriting is very good. A pen that

has been very well used imparts to the writing a thickness foreign to its natural character, which is that of a well-formed and not inelegant hand. 2. In the photograph we seem to see the picture of a good face and the portrait of a young lady of great refinement and great promise. She appears to have plenty of intelligence, some shrewdness, and affection abundant in degree but well under control. If you look at the portrait for an hour you discover in it no trace of evil. The longer you look the more you are charmed, and then you wonder what disposition will belong to him whose duty it will be to cherish this plant of beauty so great and delicate so rare.

BLUE-EYED MARY.—1. The form of address of a letter to a baronet is, "Sir James Blunt, Bart." The peculiar personal attendants upon Her Majesty, such as Ladies-in-Waiting, reside in the same palace with Her Majesty; but such dignitaries as the Lord Steward and Lord Chamberlain only attend when ceremony requires their presence. Therefore, the whole of the ladies and gentlemen of Her Majesty's household do not live at Buckingham Palace when she is there. 3. Try "Home Sweet Home," with Thalberg's variations; the melody of the dear old song is simple enough, but the variations by Thalberg render the instrumentation not so very easy. 4. In walking with two gentlemen it is your privilege to show your preference by only taking the arm of the one who is the more agreeable to you. 5. The fee to your dentist depends upon two unknown quantities with which we cannot be acquainted, namely, first, upon the length of time it takes to perform the operation, and second, upon the professional standing of the operator.

A WINTER POEM.

Which one do I fancy? That is the question.
Mabel, the dark one, has just a suggestion
Of tropical warmth in her brunette complexion.
Her hair is the shade of the seal-cap upon it.
For her graceful head would be lost in a bonnet.
Her eyes, too, are brown, but it may be reflection
From her saque of seal that tints eyes and complexion—
Whatever it is, she is handsome to-day.

There is beautiful Blanch, the fair queen of
roses!

How royally listless the grand one reposes!
Her attitude even her great health exposes.
She is royal in ermine, in sable is grand;
She is one of those women just born to command.

She is handsome, rich, generous, this sweet
queen of flowers;
But fair Blanch must grace the magnificent
bowers.

Of some one who owns a gold mine.
That delicate beauty in fox-fer and velvet—
Her name is too dainty to ever forget it.
Perhaps I'll recall it—so just wait a minute.

Yes, graceful Minette is a very small woman;
But woman she is, and most thoroughly human.
She has perfect form, and most lovely of faces:
And yet Minette stoops to the airs and the graces

Of all the most weak of her sex.

"Ah! what were you saying? That there is
another—
That plain girl now resting on arm of her
brother.

Just looking around from one face to the other,
As if she were seeking some one in this crowd.
And now her eyes glisten, her glance becomes
proud—

By George! there he goes! my most artful
friend.

Who talks of rich beauties, tells how much each
spends
For her furs, and then marries plain milk."

M. T. L.

R. M. S. thirty, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes, and would make a good wife; would like to correspond with a gentleman with a loving heart.

ELISE, twenty-one, dark-brown hair, and of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a respectable young man who is very affectionate and fond of home.

LUCE, thirty-one, a widow, would like to correspond with a city gentleman, she is musical, has a business, some money, and is of a loving disposition.

NELLIE, 5ft. 7in., with dark hair and eyes, would like to correspond with a tall, dark gentleman, who is fond of home, music and dancing; a tradesman or mechanic preferred.

MARIE, eighteen, with brown hair, sparkling gray eyes, amiable disposition and fond of home, would like to correspond with a steady young man with a view to matrimony.

ADELINA, twenty, 5ft. 5in., considered pretty, well educated, amiable, blue eyes, and has long golden hair, desires to correspond with a gentleman under forty, of good means.

JENNIE, twenty-one, medium height, dark hair and eyes, good looking, domesticated, and would make a loving wife. Respondent must be twenty-one, tall, dark and fond of home.

JESSIE, nineteen, medium height, fair, blue eyes, considered good looking and domesticated, would like to correspond with a good-looking young man, twenty-one, with a view to matrimony.

TRUE AS STEEL, twenty, 5ft. 6in., and handsome, would like to correspond with a young lady about his own age. She must have blue eyes, light hair and be fond of the stage, as "True as Steel" is in a position to marry and would like to travel with her.

PERCY, twenty-one, tall, dark, well educated and of good family, wishes to correspond with a young lady. She must be about eighteen, fair, good looking and possess a first-class voice; a lady who has a taste for theatrical pursuits preferred.

MARIE ANTOINETTE, twenty-two, tall, very good looking, splendid figure, good dancer, very cheerful, fond of home and a good housekeeper, would like to correspond with a gentleman from twenty-five to thirty, tall, dark, with beard and moustache, fond of dancing, riding and

driving; he must have a good income; a gentleman farmer or professional man preferred.

MARY, a widow, would like to make the acquaintance of a tradesman about forty-six. She is dark, has black hair, is tall, has a loving disposition and would make a true, good wife to a kind-hearted man. She would be all he could desire.

J. B., a boatswain's mate in H.M.N., wishes to correspond with a young lady not exceeding thirty, with a view to tie a knot. He is a sober and well-conducted young man, thirty-six, 5ft. 9in., good looking, dark eyes, black hair, and built in proportion.

JESSIE and **TILLY**, two friends, wish to correspond with two steady young men. "Jessie" is twenty, "Tilly" nineteen; both dark, good tempered and thoroughly domesticated; they are very fond of home and would make two steady young men's homes happy.

MARIA and **JENNIE** wish to correspond with two brothers or friends. "Maria," twenty-eight, fair, rather tall, and a widow. "Jennie," twenty-one, tall and dark. Both thoroughly domesticated and will make good wives. Respondents should be tall and dark; each should have a good income.

THOMAS and **BRADLEIGH**, twenty-five, 5ft. 10in., not bad looking, of steady habits, and sergeants in H.M. Foot Guards, would like to correspond with two young ladies of loving dispositions. They must be good looking and domesticated; two sisters or friends, residents in London preferred.

GERTRUDE and **MAUDE** would like to correspond with two young gentlemen about twenty-four, tall and good looking. "Gertrude" is twenty-one, medium height, slender, fair, of dark hair and eyes. "Maude" is nineteen, rather stout, tall, light hair and gray eyes. Both are domesticated and would make good wives to loving husbands.

PAUL wishes to correspond with a gentleman with a view to matrimony. He must be tall, dark, good looking, not over twenty-five, and must have a small income; a lawyer preferred. "Fanny" is nineteen, tall, fair, flaxen hair, considered good looking, she is accomplished and very fond of drawing and painting; would make a good wife to a loving husband.

THE CENTRE STRAND OF A GUN TACKLE writes to say that he is tired of single life and would like to correspond with a fair young lady, with a view to matrimony, whose age does not exceed twenty-four. He is chief gunner's mate in one of H.M.'s ships, twenty-eight, 5ft. 6in.; he has dark eyes and is considered good looking by his messmates.

SWEET, thirty-two, 5ft. 9in., dark, manly looking, rather stout, good tempered, of a cheerful disposition, fond of home and home comforts, well educated and gentlemanly, at present holding a clerkship at a salary of 200l. per annum, is thoroughly tired of a bachelor's life and would therefore like to make the acquaintance of a young lady residing in or near London with a view to early marriage. She must be not under twenty-four, of an amiable and loving disposition, a Protestant, domesticated, tolerably well educated, musical and have a moderate fortune or annual income.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED.

SWEET ROSEBUD is responded to by—"B. A." who is tall, fair, and has an income of 240l. a year.

LENA by—"Protius," who is twenty-one, tall, dark and of good family.

LOUIE by—"G. A." twenty-four, tall, dark, a law student, with a private income of moderate amount.

BERTHA by—"Benjamin," twenty-one, medium height, considered good looking, he thinks he would suit "Bertha"; he is a Good Templar.

C. B. C. by—"M. B." twenty-six, tall, tolerably good looking, has blue eyes, brown hair and is the daughter of a steady, respectable working man.

EMILIA by—"Charles N." twenty-two, medium height, always cheerful, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home and could be attentive to a loving wife.

EMILY by—"W." who thinks she would suit him; he is twenty-three, tall, considered passable in looks and is a mechanic.

JENNY by—"W. C. H." boatswain's mate in the Royal Navy, who thinks that he would be all that she requires, being a very steady and sober man.

RICHARD S. by—"Irene," twenty-one, light-brown eyes, dark-brown hair, generally considered good looking and thinks she is all that "Richard S." requires.

C. S. H. by—"Fannie," who thinks she is all he requires. She is nineteen, tall, dark, has her share of good looks, and her chief happiness would be in studying her dear lord and master's comforts.

J. A. by—"Sallie," good looking and a good singer; and by—"J. A. H." nineteen, dark, has black heavy eyebrows, is a singer in a choir, very fond of home, thoroughly domesticated and thinks she would make "J. A." a very loving, useful wife.

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